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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 52 of Security Council resolution 2348 (2017). It covers major developments that have occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of my previous report, of 30 June 2017 (S/2017/565). The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments following my report of 15 August on the implementation of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016 (see S/2017/712); provides updates on the implementation of recommendations to adjust the Mission's posture with respect to supporting the political transition, its preparedness to address security risks and to monitor and report on human rights violations and abuses; and outlines the assessment of the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel in protecting civilians.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 continued to be characterized by significant divisions among its signatories. As attention has shifted from the establishment and operationalization of inclusive transitional institutions to the organization of elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission indicated that holding elections by December 2017, as stipulated in the agreement, might not be possible for technical reasons. Against this background, the climate of political uncertainty that had marked the end of Joseph Kabila's second and final term as President in December 2016 is gradually re-emerging.

3. On 2 August 2017, a delegation of the opposition platform, Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, submitted to the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Corneille Nangaa, a memorandum, in which the delegation, inter alia, requested the publication of the electoral calendar by 1 September. The President of the Commission informed the delegation that an electoral calendar would be

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published by the end of August. However, in a subsequent intervention on social media, Mr. Nangaa indicated that the date of the publication of the electoral calendar would be communicated following a joint assessment by the Commission, the Government and the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process.

4. From 28 to 31 August, in Kananga, Kasai Central Province, the Independent National Electoral Commission convened a meeting of representatives of the aforementioned organs to assess the electoral process and make recommendations prior to the publication of the electoral calendar. Participants included Mr. Nangaa, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, on behalf of the Government, and Adolphe Lumanu, a member of the Majorité présidentielle party and Vice-President of the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process. Members of Parliament, civil society representatives, members of the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication, the Ambassador of Zimbabwe to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and representatives of Zambia, South Africa, the African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie also attended the meeting. MONUSCO participated in the meeting as an observer. In the final communiqué of the meeting, issued on 31 August, it was noted that the security situation in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central and the territories of Luilu and Kamiji in Lomami Province had improved; that the training of local Commission agents, the deployment of registration material and voter registration in those areas were to commence on 4 September; that Parliament needed to urgently adopt the requisite electoral legislation and the draft organic law on the organization and functioning of the National Council during the ordinary session scheduled to begin on 15 September; and that a realistic electoral calendar would be published without further delay.

5. On 9 September, the President chaired an inter-institutional meeting in Kinshasa to assess progress in the electoral process. The President of the Independent National Electoral Commission explained that, while approximately 99 per cent of the estimated electorate had already been registered, the lack of the requisite legislation, logistical means and funding impeded further progress on the electoral process. Mr. Nangaa affirmed that the diaspora would be given the opportunity to register, adding that some technical and financial issues had to be solved first. He reiterated the Commission's intention to publish a realistic electoral calendar in the near future, which would take into account the technical, operational and financial aspects of organizing the elections.

6. Political demonstrations continued, with protests and general strikes remaining the main mobilization tools of the Rassemblement. The Rassemblement and its civil society allies called for a general strike on 8 and 9 August. The strike was mostly observed in Kinshasa and Uvira, and partially in Goma, Matadi and Mbuji-Mayi, but not in other provinces. Pre-emptive deployments of the Congolese National Police were observed in several major urban centres. Continuing restrictions on civil and political liberties, including a partial interruption of social media, and the weak mobilization capacity of the Rassemblement contributed to the limited observation of the general strike.

7. On 8 August, the President of the Rassemblement, Félix Tshisekedi, encouraged the Congolese population to prepare for civil disobedience "until victory", adding that it was time for the people to overthrow the "irresponsible regime". On 9 August, the Groupe des sept partis politiques subplatform of the Rassemblement called on civil society actors to mobilize throughout the country by organizing acts of civil disobedience starting on 1 October if by that time the Independent National Electoral Commission had not convened the electorate for

presidential elections. On 20 August, the Rassemblement adopted a road map of action towards the full implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, including the convocation of the electorate by the end of September for elections by December and the subsequent departure of President Kabila.

8. Meanwhile, on 10 August, an ad hoc working group composed of prominent civil society organizations issued its sixth report on the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016. In the report, the working group noted the lack of political will to implement the agreement and cited the shared responsibility of the signatories for the political crisis, noting the dominance of the ruling majority on the political scene, a divided opposition and a marginalized civil society. The working group underlined the need to adopt a consensual electoral timeline, in accordance with the political agreement, prioritizing presidential elections. On 18 August, 32 representatives of civil society organizations met in Paris and signed a "Manifesto of the Congolese Citizen", calling upon the Congolese people to take non-violent action to force President Kabila to step down if elections are not held by December 2017. Leaders of the Rassemblement expressed support for the manifesto.

9. On 21 August, Mr. Tshisekedi met the former governor of Katanga Province and aspiring presidential candidate, Moïse Katumbi, in New York. In a subsequent media interview, both politicians underlined that the agreement of 31 December 2016 was the only way forward and rejected any possibility of a third dialogue. Both strongly refuted reports of the possible appointment of Mr. Tshisekedi to the Government as Prime Minister.

10. In the period under review, progress was made on updating the voter register. As at 10 September, the Independent National Electoral Commission had registered over 41 million voters; women represented 48 per cent of registered voters. On 4 September, voter registration training began in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, and in the Kamiji and Luilu territories of Lomami Province. On 12 September, 30 voter registration centres opened in the cities of Tshikapa, Kasai Province, and Kananga, Kasai Central Province.

11. While progress on the presidential, national legislative and provincial legislative elections foreseen in the political agreement remained slow, the Independent National Electoral Commission organized partial gubernatorial elections, following a wave of no-confidence motions tabled in several provincial assemblies. On 26 August, a first round of partial gubernatorial elections, through indirect voting by the provincial assemblies, was held in eight provinces: Bas-Uélé, Haut-Katanga, Haut-Lomami, Kwilu, South Kivu, Sud-Ubangi, Tshopo and Tshuapa. A second round was held in three provinces on 29 August. Candidates of the Majorité présidentielle party and independent candidates reportedly sponsored by the Majorité présidentielle prevailed in seven of the eight provinces.

12. The multi-partner basket support fund for the Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo, managed by the United Nations Development Programme, remains funded at only 6 per cent of the $123.3 million required, in part owing to donor concerns regarding uncertainties surrounding the political transition.

13. MONUSCO continues to support the National Oversight Mechanism in the implementation of national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to stress the need for steady progress on both national and regional commitments by all signatories. My report on the implementation of the Framework (S/2017/825) provides further details on progress on those commitments.

Economic developments

14. The downward macroeconomic trend persisted, with high inflation and a depreciation of the Congolese franc by 27 per cent since January 2017. However, the Banque centrale du Congo managed to stabilize the exchange rate at 1,560 Congolese francs to the dollar by late July. In a letter sent on 4 July to the diplomatic missions of some Western countries and international institutions, the Prime Minister, Bruno Tshibala, asked for international financial assistance to overcome the economic crisis. The country continued to experience diminished purchasing power due to high inflation, which spilled over into labour unrest. Following a strike on 21 July by medical personnel in Kinshasa, the Conseil des professeurs d'université au Congo initiated an unlimited strike on 28 July, demanding the readjustment of their salaries to the current exchange rate, and similar action was announced by primary and secondary school teachers. On 17 August, the Prime Minister concluded an agreement with the Intersyndicale nationale de la fonction publique to set the exchange rate for public sector salaries at 1,130 Congolese francs to the dollar, as compared with the previous rate of 930 francs. On 14 August, during a Council of Ministers meeting chaired by the President, the Government announced a series of measures aimed at improving the collection of State revenues and reducing customs fraud and tax evasion.

B. Security situation

15. Against the backdrop of an uncertain and complex political transition, the security situation deteriorated further in many areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a major trend: an increase in the targeting of security forces, mainly the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), by Mai-Mai groups. In North Kivu, there were repeated attacks by Mai-Mai groups on FARDC positions amid continuing violence between Hutu and Nande communities during the reporting period. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) also attempted to overrun some FARDC positions. In South Kivu, Mai-Mai groups staged attacks against FARDC troops in several strategic locations in late June. In Tanganyika Province, there were renewed clashes between Twa and Luba militia amid a possible resurgence of Mai-Mai Kata-Katanga and emerging splits between various Twa militia factions. The western part of the country also remained volatile, with a major clash between the Bundu Dia Mayala politico-religious sect and security forces in Kinshasa and Kongo Central and sporadic violence in the three provinces of the Kasai region, notably clashes between Kamuina Nsapu militia and security forces, and between ethnic militia groups.

16. The situation in some border areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained of concern, with reports of South Sudanese armed groups taking positions on the border between Haut-Uélé Province and South Sudan, as well as reports of an incursion of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) into north-eastern Ituri in late August. Meanwhile, refugees continued to arrive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, fleeing conflict in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. The situation in Kasai Province also contributed to movements of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Angola, with a few spontaneous returns.

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

17. In North Kivu Province, FARDC troops were intensively targeted by armed groups and sustained heavy losses. In Rutshuru territory, on 6 July, Nyatura attacked FARDC troops, killing four soldiers and injuring three others. On 11 July, Mai-Mai Charles attacked FARDC positions in Nyamilima, killing five soldiers and injuring

eight others and two civilians. On 29 July, Mai-Mai Charles ambushed FARDC troops in Nyamilima, leaving six soldiers dead and 11 wounded. In another ambush on 2 August, Mai-Mai Mazembe elements shot a high-ranking FARDC officer. Other armed group alliances, notably the Mouvement national pour le renouveau, have been systematically targeting FARDC and national police positions in the Grand Nord of North Kivu. In support to efforts by FARDC to regain control of the situation, MONUSCO conducted patrols in the affected areas and increased collaboration with the local authorities and civil society through the community alert networks.

18. Similarly, in Masisi territory, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain attacked two FARDC positions, killing two soldiers. MONUSCO intensified its patrols and encouraged FARDC to reinforce its positions. In Walikale, on 16 July, a coalition of Alliance, Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie and Nyatura elements attacked an FARDC camp, making an incursion in western Kitchanga, prompting the population to seek refuge around a MONUSCO base.

19. Ethnic killings and abductions were also recurrent. In Rutshuru territory, Nyatura abducted 14 Nande civilians on 3 July. In Masisi territory, Nyatura elements beheaded a Hunde man at his farm on 8 July. Nyatura also abducted a Hutu chief in Tongo on 12 July, and nine civilians in Kanyobagonga on 13 July. MONUSCO successfully facilitated talks between Nande and Hutu communities and managed, in collaboration with FARDC, to secure the release of all the abductees.

20. In Beni territory, the lull in brutal attacks by ADF on civilians continued. There was, however, an increase in the number of abductions of civilians and attacks on the armed forces by ADF. On 12 August, alleged ADF elements, well equipped and wearing new FARDC uniforms, attacked four FARDC positions approximately 30 km from Oicha. At least 14 FARDC elements were killed and three wounded. The assailants also took away FARDC weaponry. The change in the modus operandi of ADF, from avoiding contact with FARDC to direct attacks on troops, could be connected to a shared interest between some ADF commanders and resurgent Mai-Mai groups, whose recent focus has been on attacks on State armed forces and symbols. On 17 September, one Tanzanian peacekeeper was killed and another injured in clashes between a joint FARDC-MONUSCO patrol and suspected ADF elements in Mamudioma.

21. Meanwhile, security concerns remained high in the town of Beni and Butembo. On 16 July, unidentified armed men kidnapped two Catholic priests near Butembo and demanded a ransom of $15,000 for their release. In addition, on 7 August, Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové abducted some 65 civilians near Lubero. In Lubero territory, Mai-Mai groups were increasingly active; most notably, clashes between Mai-Mai Mazembe and Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové displaced over 16,000 people. From 29 July to 4 August, in Kirumba, a delegation of the provincial government, with MONUSCO support, engaged without success in talks with the two armed groups.

22. In South Kivu Province, the resurgence of Mai-Mai Yakutumba and its temporary capture of FARDC positions near the gold mining town of Misisi in late June led to the displacement of 80,000 people. FARDC managed to repulse the armed group with the support of MONUSCO. Mai-Mai Yakutumba has, however, consolidated its position and control over a significant stretch of the shoreline of Lake Tanganyika, engaging in piracy operations and accelerating smuggling activities, which further contribute to strengthening the armed group. The Mission dispatched two standing combat deployments to support the protection of civilians and facilitated the deployment of the national police in the area.

23. Along the border with Burundi, FARDC troops arrested around 50 foreign combatants, originating from the Forces nationales de libération du Burundi, the Forces républicaines du Burundi and the Résistance pour un état de droit au Burundi, which are loosely aligned with Congolese Banyamulenge Tutsi "Gumino" fighters in the Hauts Plateaux region of South Kivu. This network of armed groups is competing with Mai-Mai Yakutumba for control of gold mining deposits in the south of the province.

24. In other developments in South Kivu, on 28 July, 37 prisoners escaped from the Bukavu central prison following the explosion of a hand grenade. MONUSCO assisted the authorities in securing the perimeter and preventing further escapes.

25. On 15 September, Congolese security forces forcibly repatriated four Burundian asylum seekers accused of conducting illegal armed patrols around refugee sites in Kamanyola, Walungu territory, South Kivu. On the same date, Burundian asylum seekers and refugees protested against the repatriation in front of a post of intelligence services in Kamanyola. One FARDC soldier was killed in clashes between the refugees and security forces. The armed forces and national police opened fire on the protesters, resulting in 39 refugees killed and over 117 others injured. Six FARDC soldiers and four national police officers were also injured. Refugees sought shelter around a MONUSCO forward base in the area, and the Mission provided medical assistance to the wounded. The authorities opened an investigation into the incident. MONUSCO is also conducting an inquiry into the response of its peacekeepers, and the Security Council will be informed of its outcome.

26. In Tanganyika Province, the threat of Mai-Mai Yakutumba in the Bendera area, near the border with South Kivu, decreased following operations by FARDC, supported by MONUSCO. However, the level of violence in several areas of the province remains of concern. The conflict between Luba and Twa militias escalated in Kalemie territory, especially in Lambo Kilela, Lukwangulu and Mulonge, where 73 people died and 25 were injured during clashes. Twa militiamen allegedly raped 32 women between June and August 2017 in Nyunzu territory. Mai-Mai Kata-Katanga elements formerly loyal to the warlord Gédéon Kyungu Mutanga, who surrendered in 2016, are mobilizing from their locations in Mitwaba, Moba and Pweto against government security forces. Mai-Mai Kata-Katanga elements are also mobilizing against the Twa near Moba, signalling a deepening level of complexity and interwoven community conflicts emerging in the province. The increased resort to force by provincial authorities in addressing the Twa-Luba conflict has compounded the humanitarian situation. By the end of July, more than 565,000 people had been displaced in the province, representing an increase of 60,000 people compared with the first quarter of the year. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 52 per cent of the internally displaced people are women.

27. In Ituri Province, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) remained the greatest threat to civilians, accounting for 90 per cent of human rights abuses documented in July in South Irumu territory. A joint MONUSCO-FARDC operation from 13 to 23 July resulted in the killing of two senior FRPI officers. On 14 July, in Mambasa territory, an unidentified Mai-Mai group killed four rangers of the Okapi nature reserve escorting foreign journalists, who escaped unharmed. Following a rise in violent intercommunal incidents and land disputes, Hema and Lendu leaders in Djugu territory agreed on 14 July to establish a commission, overseen by the provincial government and supported by MONUSCO, to address the sources of tension.

28. In Haut-Uélé Province, the withdrawal of United States special forces and the drawdown of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army have made it difficult for FARDC to repel infiltration by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from the Central African Republic. In July, LRA systematically attacked and abducted civilians in artisanal mining areas close to main roads and towns. MONUSCO supported FARDC in conducting enhanced patrols. As a result, LRA partially withdrew towards the Central African Republic, but maintained a reduced presence west of Garamba National Park. MONUSCO is also investigating reports of the presence of South Sudanese armed groups in different locations in Haut-Uélé and the northern part of Ituri, as well as the reported incursion of SPLA elements into northern Ituri in late August.

Western Democratic Republic of the Congo

29. There was a relative lull in fighting in the Kasai region during the reporting period, despite periodic instances of serious violence, such as in Tshikapa, Kasai Province, and in the Luiza territory of Kasai Central Province, and women and children continued to account for a significant portion of the victims. The violence in the Kasai region has resulted in over 1.4 million internally displaced people, most of whom are women and children, and 31,700 Congolese refugees in Angola, some of whom have been gradually returning. These returnees have, at times, provoked violent community tensions, given the increasingly ethnically charged environment in the Kasai region. Operations by national security forces continued in territories across four provinces: in the Luebo and Kamonia territories of Kasai, in the Dimbelenge and Luiza territories of Kasai Central, in Kabeya-Kamwanga, Miabi and Tshilenge in Kasai Oriental and in Mwene-Ditu in Lomami. In Kalala-Diboko, Luiza territory, 67 Kamuina Nsapu elements and civilians were allegedly killed during operations by national security forces.

30. Ethnically based violence continued, with clashes between Kamuina Nsapu, some of whom have an allegiance to the Luba and Lulua communities, and the emerging Bana Mura militia, generally comprising individuals from the Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela ethnic groups. Clashes took place in the Kamonia and Luiza territories of Kasai Central. The Bana Mura militia, which has received some support from prominent political figures in Kasai, was allegedly armed and supported by national security forces and local chiefs. The risk of spillover of ethnic tensions from the Kasai provinces remains acute, with continued clashes between various ethnic militias, initially triggered by the original conflict involving Kamuina Nsapu, which have disrupted the delicate ethnic balance in the region.

31. On 19 September, the President chaired the opening ceremony of a three-day reconciliation forum for the Kasai region, which was attended by several Congolese stakeholders. Some opposition members declined to take part in the forum, arguing that identifying the perpetrators of the violence in the region was the prerequisite for commencing a reconciliation process.

32. Following the Makala prison break in Kinshasa on 17 May, insecurity has increased, not only in Kinshasa, but also in neighbouring areas. On 14 July, unknown elements attacked the Kinshasa Central Market, killing its administrator and four police officers. MONUSCO documented several other attacks on detention facilities attached to tribunals and some police stations in Kinshasa after the prison break.

33. On 7 August, Bundu Dia Mayala elements carried out attacks and demonstrations in Kinshasa and Kongo Central, targeting sensitive installations, but were successfully repulsed by national security forces. MONUSCO documented at least 43 killings in different locations in Kinshasa in this context.

Humanitarian situation

34. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, approximately 8.5 million persons, including 5.5 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance — a 16 per cent increase since January 2017. The number of internally displaced people has reached 3.8 million, and close to 621,700 Congolese nationals have sought refuge in countries of the subregion. Moreover, the Democratic Republic of the Congo currently hosts some 541,400 refugees from neighbouring countries. Some 7.7 million people face acute hunger, a 30 per cent increase since 2016, and 43 per cent of children under the age of 5 are chronically malnourished.

35. In the Kasai region, some 2.8 million people are facing critical levels of food insecurity, an increase of 600 per cent between June 2016 and June 2017. Over 1.5 million children in the Kasai region continue to endure the risks of violence, displacement and loss of access to health and education. The prospect of waterborne diseases in the upcoming rainy season remains a serious risk for the displaced population. As of September, 31,700 refugees from the Kasai region were registered in Angola. The security situation in the region has significantly impeded humanitarian access, affecting both the delivery of assistance and the verification of information. Agencies are scaling up and prioritizing the response in the region. However, as at 25 August, the total funding received for the Kasai response stood at $23.7 million, representing 37 per cent of the $64.5 million requested in the flash appeal launched for the complex emergency in the Kasai region. As of September, funding for the humanitarian response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained at 27 per cent of the $812.6 million needed for 2017.

Human rights situation

36. MONUSCO documented 1,329 human rights violations and abuses committed from June to August, compared with the 1,444 incidents recorded during the period from March to May. About 73 per cent of those violations and abuses occurred in conflict-affected provinces. Armed groups perpetrated 533 human rights abuses, while State agents were responsible for 796 violations, with 27 per cent attributed to FARDC and 24 per cent to the national police. At least 347 victims of extrajudicial and arbitrary killings, including 31 women and 58 children, were registered during the period under review. Armed groups killed 208 people, including 23 women and 12 children, while State agents killed 139 people, including 8 women and 46 children.

37. Democratic space continued to shrink, with violations of civil and political rights, particularly the freedoms of peaceful assembly, of opinion and of expression. MONUSCO documented 247 cases of human rights violations linked to restrictions of democratic space throughout the country from June to August, compared with 245 in the previous three-month period. Of those, five human rights violations were perpetrated in the context of voter registration operations, by national police force officers assigned to secure registration centres, mainly relating to rapes of women trying to register.

38. Some journalists, political opponents and civil society activists remained the targets of threats, harassment and violence. Demonstrations staged by civil society on 31 July against delays in the publication of the electoral calendar were banned by local authorities in at least five localities, including Beni and Butembo, North Kivu Province, Bunia, Ituri Province, Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga Province, and Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai Oriental Province, amid heavy deployment of national security forces. At least 131 persons, including several journalists, were arrested throughout the country. Five of them remain in detention. On 7 August, prior to the two-day general strike announced by the Rassemblement, the use of social media was restricted until 11 August.

39. MONUSCO continued to address serious crimes committed by armed groups and security forces against the civilian population through its Prosecution Support Cells. During the reporting period, support to military justice from such cells resulted in 23 convictions, including that of Jules Becker, an FARDC colonel sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for war crimes.

40. Joint investigation missions continued in some parts of the country and resulted in the indictment of at least 50 FARDC soldiers and 14 national police force officers for their involvement in human rights violations and war crimes. However, in the Kasai region, procedural concerns continued to hamper MONUSCO support to military justice in ongoing investigations. On 4 and 5 July, MONUSCO and national authorities jointly identified an additional 38 mass graves in the Kasai region, bringing the total number of mass graves discovered since the beginning of the conflict in the region to 87.

41. MONUSCO continued to provide support to national security forces, in line with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. Steps are under way, at Headquarters, to review that support and adjust it as appropriate, especially in view of the increasing involvement of FARDC and the national police in human rights violations.

Sexual violence

42. At least 195 persons, including 120 women, 27 men and 48 children, were reported as victims of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by State agents (20 per cent of all reported conflict-related sexual violence) and armed groups (80 per cent) between June and August, which represents an increase compared with the last reporting period. Among State agents, members of FARDC remained the main perpetrators, with about 18 per cent of violations. Inter-ethnic violence in Tanganyika Province between Twa and Luba communities resulted in at least 99 of those victims of sexual violence, including the 27 men.

Child protection

43. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 613 such violations in conflict-affected areas from June to August, an increase compared with 527 during the previous reporting period. A total of 403 children, including 24 girls, escaped or were separated from armed groups. The main armed groups that recruited and used children were Kamuina Nsapu (102 cases), Mai-Mai Mazembe (68 cases), Raia Mutomboki (33 cases) and Twa militia (31 cases).

44. MONUSCO also verified the killing of at least 21 children and the maiming of 23; most of those violations were perpetrated by FRPI (8 killed and 6 maimed). Moreover, there were 51 documented cases of sexual violence against girls, committed by both State agents (FARDC: 14 cases; national police: 3 cases) and armed groups (Mai-Mai Simba: 13 cases, FRPI: 7 cases, Nduma défense du Congo-Renové: 7 cases). A total of 79 children were documented as having been abducted, most often by Mai-Mai Simba (21 cases) for purposes of recruitment. The Mission also verified 22 attacks against schools, FRPI having conducted half of those attacks, while FARDC was responsible for attacks against four schools.

Regional developments

45. A number of regional and subregional meetings of significance for the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were held during the reporting period.

46. In his closing statement to the thirty-seventh Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held on 19 and 20 August in Pretoria, the new Chairperson, the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, emphasized that the Summit had taken note of the fact that it might not be possible to hold elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by December 2017, owing to a number of challenges. The SADC Heads of State and Government urged the Independent National Electoral Commission to publish a revised electoral calendar and approved the appointment by SADC of a Special Envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who represented his country at the meeting, welcomed the support of SADC for the publication of a realistic electoral calendar. Several Congolese opposition figures and civil society actors criticized SADC for what some described as a lack of solidarity with the Congolese people on the part of the organization.

47. On 23 August, in Addis Ababa, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held a session on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Peace and Security Council welcomed the decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government of SADC at the thirty-seventh Ordinary Summit, including the assessment that it would be unrealistic to hold elections by December; called on the international community to provide the Independent National Electoral Commission with the necessary resources; reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016; and underlined that unilateral decisions to impose sanctions on personalities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would not create an environment conducive to the resolution of the crisis in the country.

48. On 26 July, in Kinshasa, the Minister of Public Security of Burundi, Alain Guillaume Bunyoni, held talks with senior Congolese government officials on possible joint strategies to curb insecurity along the border of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From 7 to 10 September, the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework visited eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to assess progress on the neutralization of negative forces and the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of foreign combatants, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), and in finding a suitable solution for the relocation of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition), temporarily accommodated in a MONUSCO camp near Goma, North Kivu, and the repatriation and reintegration of former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) members still cantoned in Rwanda and Uganda. The Technical Support Committee formulated recommendations, which are mentioned in my report on the implementation of the Framework.

III. Deployment of MONUSCO and implementation of its mandate

A. Progress in implementing recommendations on adjustments of Mission priorities, posture and presence

49. MONUSCO continued to adjust its posture and presence, in order to further align its footprint with the priorities laid out in resolution 2348 (2017), to seek greater efficiencies, and to accommodate budget reductions decided by the General Assembly for the 2017/18 financial year.

50. In improving the Mission's footprint, flexibility and mobility, one key change was the expansion and redrawing of the sector boundaries of the MONUSCO force to enable brigades in eastern provinces to redeploy and intervene more flexibly across both eastern and western provinces, by relying, inter alia, on rapidly deployable battalions. MONUSCO also took measures to enhance the mobility of the Intervention Brigade from its position in Beni, with various Intervention Brigade companies able to conduct operations throughout eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

51. MONUSCO continued to reinforce its presence in the three Kasai provinces, by bolstering the field office in Kananga, Kasai Central, and the sub-office in Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai Oriental, with civilian staff redeployed from elsewhere in the Mission area, and by establishing a sub-office and a subsector of the United Nations police force in Tshikapa, Kasai. Plans are also under way, in consultation with the concerned police-contributing countries, to relocate one formed police unit from the east to Kananga. The MONUSCO force has increased its presence in the Kasai region through the deployment of three companies in Kananga, Mbuji-Mayi and Tshikapa, enabling the rapid redeployment of five temporary standing combat deployments, if required.

52. The Mission also made significant adjustments in the light of reductions in its troop ceiling, as requested in resolution 2348 (2017) and in the light of the reduced budget. MONUSCO and Headquarters developed a plan of reductions that would best allow the Mission to continue prioritizing both the protection of civilians and the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 and the electoral process as efficiently as possible. As a result, MONUSCO has repatriated 727 troops from North Kivu and is in the process of repatriating an additional 960 troops by 1 October. Further, MONUSCO seeks to generate three additional companies of special forces trained in jungle warfare from Intervention Brigade troop-contributing countries, to replace three companies being repatriated by November. The Mission is also generating savings by retaining a smaller footprint of individual police officers and civilian staff and through significant reductions across operational categories. These operational reductions include cuts to air support and cuts in fuel and rations support to national security forces.

53. There was no progress in the deployment, through inter-mission cooperation, of two additional formed police units.

54. The recently concluded strategic review of MONUSCO (see S/2017/826) will present further recommendations on adjustments to the Mission, which will inform the Security Council's decision on the present report and further discussion on the strategic dialogue with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the exit strategy of MONUSCO.

B. Assessment of the performance of uniformed Mission personnel in protecting civilians

55. During the reporting period, there were no instances of underperformance by the MONUSCO force. This Mission continued to monitor and evaluate on a regular basis the performance of the force in identifying areas requiring improvement.

56. A majority of the formed police units were found to be operationally ready and appropriately trained. An evaluation conducted in July showed that a number of formed police units were operating with unserviceable or expired equipment provided by the police-contributing countries concerned. Aside from the issue of the

unserviceability of equipment, the formed police units were assessed to be performing generally well.

C. Preparations to address risks linked to the electoral process

57. MONUSCO continued its efforts to prevent and mitigate the risk of violence linked to the electoral process, including the risk of widespread violence in urban areas, maintaining and revising, where appropriate, its local protection contingency plans. The Mission retains, however, limited capacity to respond in the event of widespread violence, particularly in urban areas. At present, MONUSCO has two force infantry companies and two formed police units in Kinshasa. In urban areas with both force and formed police unit presence, the Mission continues to conduct joint patrols, with intensifying tempo and reach during moments of anticipated and actual unrest. The focus remains on prevention, as no additional MONUSCO troops or police officers would be able to significantly change the situation in the case of a major deterioration in security.

58. The Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region continued their good offices engagement with national political actors and key regional partners to encourage the swift implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, which would minimize further delays in the electoral process and the risk of further violence. MONUSCO and the Office of the Special Envoy also continued to advocate with the authorities for the swift implementation of the confidence-building measures enshrined in the political agreement, which would contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to the organization of free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

59. MONUSCO continued its efforts to prevent electoral violence by reinforcing the capacity of its partners, including national authorities and security forces, to promote and protect fundamental freedoms and monitor human rights violations and restrictions on democratic space.

D. Protection of civilians and neutralization of armed groups

60. To mitigate the reduction of the footprint of the MONUSCO force as a result of the repatriation of one battalion, the Mission is adjusting its protection of civilians strategy, shifting from a "protection-by-presence" to a "protection-by-projection" approach, mostly in areas where MONUSCO bases are closing. In this context, MONUSCO reinforced its community alert networks, with an emphasis on Kasai Central. Community alert networks transmitted, on average, 486 early warning alerts per month, an average monthly increase of 170 alerts compared with the previous reporting period. Of all such alerts, 85 per cent resulted in a response by the Government and/or MONUSCO to protect civilians. Those not responded to were either in areas with limited State security deployment and capacity, or in areas with difficult access.

61. The concept of protection through projection currently under development requires a whole-of-mission effort. In North Kivu, MONUSCO relocated one Intervention Brigade company from Eringeti to Sake to increase its use throughout the country. MONUSCO also conducted a pilot operation led by the rapidly deployable battalion of North Kivu with the involvement of civilian teams, including women, with a view to testing the type of operations that could be undertaken in areas vacated by the repatriated battalion. Furthermore, community liaison assistants are now embedded in standing combat deployments and rapidly deployable battalions.

62. One Intervention Brigade company, one company from the Western Brigade and two companies from the rapidly deployable battalion of South Kivu were deployed to the Kasai region. United Nations police reinforced their presence in the Kasai region from 3 to 36 officers. In areas where MONUSCO has established a presence, a decline in protection threats and incidents was reported, while schools and health centres reopened and 70 per cent of the displaced population returned.

63. In Kasai Central Province, MONUSCO continued to support mediation efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of customary conflicts, through capacity-building workshops with the Direction générale des affaires coutumières. MONUSCO also began rolling out its child protection action plan for Kasai through training sessions for FARDC on age assessments and the screening of new recruits.

64. In Tanganyika Province, the Mission supported efforts by provincial authorities and communities to set up a baraza, or intercommunal peace dialogue, to prevent violence between Twa and Luba communities in the Kabalo, Kalemie, Kongolo, Manono and Nyunzu territories.

65. From 12 to 22 July, MONUSCO conducted a joint investigation with judicial authorities following reports of human rights abuses by FDLR against civilians in Bunyakiri, South Kivu Province. The Mission confirmed the killing of 34 people, the wounding of 20, the fact that 7 others were missing and the destruction of more than 60 houses.

66. The United Nations Mine Action Service responded to 35 requests related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, as well as to police and military efforts, destroying 226 explosive remnants of war, 33,919 rounds of small arms ammunition and 319 weapons.

E. Disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

67. From 1 July to 7 August, MONUSCO received 44 Congolese male combatants, the majority of whom entered phase III of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The Mission received and repatriated 46 foreign combatants to Rwanda and one foreign combatant to Burundi, most of them affiliated with the Forces combattantes abacunguzi.

68. The leader of Nduma défense du Congo, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, who stands accused of crimes against humanity before national courts, surrendered to MONUSCO on 26 July, together with two of his associates. That event followed a long campaign of awareness-raising and endeavours to support the Government's efforts to facilitate Sheka's capture or surrender. Pursuant to an agreement with the Government, Sheka and his associates were handed over to national authorities at Ndolo prison, in Kinshasa.

69. MONUSCO continued its support for sustaining programme camps in Kamina and Kitona, where 458 ex-combatants are receiving vocational training, and the implementation of 37 community violence reduction projects with a projected number of 63,204 beneficiaries, composed mostly of young people at risk (53,820), as well as a core group of ex-combatants (5,160) in the programme and vulnerable women (4,224). Basic needs were also provided to 297 FDLR elements and 1,075 of their dependents in the voluntary disarmament programme camps of Kanyabayonga, North Kivu, and Walungu, South Kivu, and the Government-managed camp in Kisangani, Tshopo. Meanwhile, support was also provided to 577 SPLM/A in Opposition elements accommodated by MONUSCO in Munigi camp in Goma. MONUSCO continues to work on finding individual solutions for those in the camp.

F. Stabilization

70. Stabilization efforts continued within a context of political uncertainty, which is not conducive to achieving a sustainable impact. Nevertheless, MONUSCO supported the launching of two additional stabilization programmes in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, in the framework of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy. Both programmes are financed through the Stabilization Coherence Fund, as part of a $27 million, multiple donor-funded budget for stabilization interventions in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, implemented by consortiums led by United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations. The development of compacts between the Mission and the provincial authorities in Ituri and South Kivu fostered enhanced engagement of the authorities in the implementation of the Support Strategy.

71. In the framework of the tailored stabilization strategy for South Irumu, Ituri, MONUSCO force and civilian components developed a joint strategy, aimed at increasing governmental commitment to identify a sustainable political solution to the FRPI threat. In the Kasai region, a joint assessment by MONUSCO and the authorities involved in stabilization activities identified community violence reduction programmes and dialogue as priorities for stabilization efforts.

72. Following mass escapes from prisons in Bukavu, Bunia, Bunyakiri, Kabare, Masisi, Nyuzu and Walungu, the national authorities, with the support of MONUSCO, adopted a plan to reinforce security in 38 prisons. MONUSCO advised prison staff on security regulations and advocated with the authorities for the reactivation of contingency plans. In addition, the Mission established an integrated prison security task force to comprehensively address prison security challenges from a political, protection and operational perspective. The United Nations police force continued to implement its operational strategy on the fight against insecurity in Beni, Bukavu, Bunia, Goma and Kalemie.

G. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

73. MONUSCO continued to enforce my zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, including through enhanced internal awareness-raising, the enforcement of strict curfew and out-of-bounds regimes, and military police deterrent patrols. The availability of toll-free hotlines, a dedicated email address and complaint drop boxes in MONUSCO facilities enhanced mechanisms for the reporting of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. One such allegation was recorded during the reporting period.

74. MONUSCO continued to conduct robust actions to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, with increased focus on community outreach activities through community-based complaint mechanisms. To ensure the timely, adequate and sustainable provision of support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, MONUSCO continued to work closely with its partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. A system has also been put in place in close coordination with the Mission's Victims' Rights Advocate, to maintain contact with victims on a regular basis and to monitor the services provided to them by partners in order to ensure that their specific needs are met.

IV. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

75. Some 95 safety and security related incidents, affecting 10 female and 57 male United Nations personnel, as well as United Nations assets and operations, were

reported, compared with 142 in the previous period. These included 49 criminal incidents targeting both national and international staff, 4 cases linked to civil unrest, 33 hazard-related cases and 9 incidents related to armed conflict. MONUSCO support to FARDC operations against armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and ongoing confrontations in the Kasai region could lead to direct threats to United Nations personnel, programmes and installations, while the current political and socioeconomic dynamics also entail security implications.

76. In my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 15 August, I transmitted the executive summary of the report of the United Nations Security Management System Board of Inquiry on the critical security incident resulting in the deaths, in March, of two members of the Group of Experts in Kananga, Kasai Central (S/2017/713, annex). In the letter, I informed the Council of my intention to discuss with Congolese officials and consult with Council members regarding the establishment of a follow-on mechanism in connection with the deaths of the two experts. Following my initial consultations on 17 August in New York with the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, I dispatched a small team, led by my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, to Kinshasa to develop and agree on the modalities of United Nations support to the Congolese investigation into the deaths of the two experts. As agreed with the Congolese authorities and in connection with my letter dated 17 September 2017 to the Vice-Prime Minister, I intend to deploy, as soon as possible, a small team to assist the Congolese authorities in their investigations into the killing of the experts and to report regularly to the Security Council on those efforts.

V. Observations

77. The broad consensus achieved among key political actors with the signing of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement on 31 December 2016 provided the Congolese people with some hope that the significant gains achieved in stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent years could be maintained. That consensus is fast eroding and a climate of political uncertainty is gradually re-emerging. I am concerned that the relative respite in mounting political tensions achieved through the signing of the political agreement could lapse by the end of 2017, in the absence of a consensus on the political path forward. I therefore appeal to the signatories of the agreement and to the Government, which has a particular role to play by virtue of its sovereign responsibilities, to create the conditions necessary for the political process to move forward. Any failure to faithfully and fully implement the political agreement and end the transition period in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would only heighten the risk of a further escalation of the political crisis and a deterioration of the security situation, with dire consequences on the human rights and humanitarian situations in the country. The likely repercussions in the region would be grave. In this regard, the support of the United Nations alone, although vital, will not suffice. I urge regional and international actors, working in a coordinated and inclusive manner, to maximize their efforts to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo in navigating the challenges it faces. A unified front around the importance of the swift and full implementation of the agreement, culminating in the early holding of credible and transparent elections, in keeping with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, is key to sustaining progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and avoiding a descent into instability and conflict, with far-reaching consequences for the people of the country, as well as for the region and beyond.

78. In the meantime, it is of critical importance that the Government, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process demonstrate the required political will to advance the electoral process, in the spirit of the agreement of 31 December 2016. I urgently call for the publication of a credible calendar for the holding of elections in as timely a manner as possible and in line with the provisions of the agreement.

79. I welcome the commencement in early September of preparations for voter registration in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces and in the Kamiji and Luilu territories of Lomami Province and call upon the Commission to ensure that the voter registration process is brought to a swift and successful conclusion. I urge the Parliament to adopt the draft organic law on the organization and functioning of the National Council and to make the necessary amendments to the electoral law as soon as possible. I also encourage lawmakers to explore the possibility of increasing the representation of women during the deliberations on the amended electoral law, in line with the aspirations for gender parity enshrined in the Constitution.

80. The Government, the Commission and the National Council have a responsibility to ensure a level playing field for all political parties to prepare for, and participate in, the planned elections. That entails the full implementation of all the confidence-building measures stipulated in the political agreement, the opening of political space, and full respect for human rights, including freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly.

81. I am deeply concerned by the fragile security situation in several parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against the backdrop of continued political uncertainty. While ADF and FDLR have reduced their activities, increased and repeated targeted attacks by various — Mai-Mai groups and other armed elements on national security forces and symbols of State authority in North Kivu and South Kivu are a cause for concern. I am also concerned about the security situation in some areas of the western part of the country. I strongly condemn the attacks by the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai region and the acts of violence committed by the Bundu Dia Mayala elements in Kinshasa and Kongo Central. I urge the Government to exercise maximum restraint and abide by its human rights obligations in its efforts to restore security and I call on all actors to end the cycle of violence, particularly in the Kasai region.

82. Impunity only encourages more violence. I urge the authorities to take decisive measures to bring impunity to an end. Strong governmental action is required to bring to justice national police and FARDC elements involved in human rights violations, including those with command responsibilities at all levels.

83. The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in the Kasai region, is of grave concern. I call on donors to provide additional humanitarian funding to the flash appeal launched for the Kasai region and for the overall humanitarian response in the country. I urge the Government, in keeping with its responsibilities, to do its utmost to alleviate the suffering of the population, whose living conditions continue to deteriorate as a result of the economic downturn.

84. Lastly, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Maman Sidikou, for his leadership and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team for their dedication to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also wish to thank my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Said Djinnit, for his diplomatic efforts at the regional level. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to the regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations, for their invaluable support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MONUSCO
September 2017
MONUSCO Headquarters
Force Forward Headquarters
Brigade Headquarters
Sector Headquarters
Formed Police Unit
Logistics base
Military Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOUTH SUDAN
UGANDA
RWANDA
BURUNDI
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
ANGOLA
CONGO
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bangui
Brazzaville
Kinshasa
Kampala
Kigali
Bujumbura
Kindu
Kisangani
Lubumbashi
Kolwezi
Kananga
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Bandundu
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Kasongo
Lusambo
Kabinda
Bukavu
Goma
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Isiro
Buta
Gbadolite
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Ubundu
Opala
Lubutu
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Kasongo
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Nyamulagira
Kalungu
Manono
Mitwaba
Pepa
Moira
Kyela
Chitipa
Karonga
Nkhata Bay
Mzuzu
Salima
Lilongwe
Mangochi
Blantyre
Chikwawa
Nsanje
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Petauke
Lundazi
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Kasama
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Isoka
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Samfya
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Nchelenge
Kaputa
Mporokoso
Kasama
Luwingu
Mpulungu
Kalabo
Senanga
Sesheke
Livingstone
Kazungula
Choma
Monze
Mazabuka
Kalomo
Zimba
Kariba
Siavonga
Chirundu
Lusaka
Kafue
Chongwe
Luangwa
Petauke
Chipata
Mambwe
Nyimba
Katete
Lundazi
Chadiza
Mchinji
Kasungu
Nkhotakota
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Mangochi
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Machinga
Mulanje
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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2348 (2017), in which the Council requested a report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It covers developments since the issuance of the latest report of 10 March 2017 (S/2017/208) and provides information on peace and security developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region up to 15 September 2017.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. The security situation in the region was affected by the activities of armed groups in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika provinces and the crisis in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Persisting conflicts in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan, as well as the political situation in Burundi and tensions in the Pool region in the Republic of the Congo, created additional challenges to peace and security in the region.

3. As detailed in the latest reports on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), despite cooperation between and continuing military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO, foreign and Congolese armed groups, notably the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces and several Mai-Mai groups, perpetrated violence and human rights abuses against civilians, attacked security

[1] In this context, the region includes the 13 signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.

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agents and institutions and engaged in illegal economic activities, including illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources. New armed group alliances such as the Mouvement national pour la révolution in North Kivu and the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo in South Kivu seemed to deliberately target the Congolese security forces and symbols of state authority.

4. The crisis in the Kasai region in western Democratic Republic of the Congo resulted in high levels of violence and human rights violations against civilians. It also threatened regional peace and security, following the influx of Congolese refugees into Angola, leading the Government of Angola to reinforce its security presence in the border areas.

5. There was a relative lull in fighting in the Kasai region during the reporting period, although there were periodic instances of serious violence, such as in Tshikapa (Kasai) and Luiza territory (Kasai Central), with women and children continuing to account for a significant portion of the victims. Ethnically based violence continued, with clashes between Kamuina Nsapu, some of whom have an allegiance to the Luba and Lulua communities, and the emerging Bana Mura militia, generally comprised of individuals from the Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela ethnic groups. Clashes took place in Kamonia and Luiza territories (Kasai Central). The Bana Mura, which has received some support from prominent political figures in Kasai, was allegedly armed and supported by State security forces and local chiefs.

6. In the context of the political crisis and the stalled transition, violence continued to spread into western Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Kongo Central and Kinshasa, strategic facilities and Congolese security forces were recently targeted by Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK) and Bundu Dia Mayala (BDM). Violence perpetrated by the latter in the Congolese capital and the neighbouring Kongo Central province on 7 August resulted in the death of 70 persons.

7. Security incidents also occurred along the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, as a result of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army, which had increased again in the context of the withdrawal of United States Africa Command troops and the drawdown of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army. Furthermore, the conflict in South Sudan exacerbated insecurity along the border of South Sudan with those two countries. At the time of finalizing the present report, 577 members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) remained on MONUSCO premises near Goma, and little progress was made towards their repatriation or resettlement in a third country during the reporting period.

8. In Uganda, intercommunal tensions in the Kasese district, near the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continued to raise concern. Tensions also increased along the Ugandan border with South Sudan as a result of the continued influx of refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan.

9. The implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, signed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in December 2013, recorded no progress during the reporting period. Consequently, the repatriation of former M23 elements from Uganda and Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained stalled. On 25 April, 44 former M23 members, intercepted by the Ugandan army at the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were tried and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for illegal possession of firearms and illegal entry into Uganda. According to the Government of Uganda, over 900 former M23 elements previously cantoned in Bihanga military camp, Uganda, are presently unaccounted for, which raises

concern about their whereabouts. Among them is Sultani Makenga, a former M23 military leader.

10. On 27 July, at the request of President Yoweri Museveni, the Government of Uganda convened a technical meeting bringing together representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry for Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Uganda. Participants discussed the implementation of a presidential directive, including the consideration of former M23 members for refugee status. They agreed to hold further consultations, notably with UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross, prior to submitting recommendations to the Government of Uganda.

11. The overall security situation in Burundi remained relatively stable, although isolated acts of violence and security incidents were reported in Bujumbura and other parts of the country. These included reports of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of returnees upon their arrival. Killings, disappearances, abductions, cases of torture and grenade attacks were also reported.

B. Political developments

12. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, against the backdrop of differences between the Government and the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement (Rassemblement) led by Felix Tshisekedi, as detailed in the report on progress in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 (S/2017/712), on 22 July, Joseph Olenghankoy, leader of a faction of the Rassemblement, was appointed President of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord et du processus électoral (CNSA). As a result, the faction of Rassemblement led by Felix Tshisekedi called for a two-day "ville morte" general strike on 8 and 9 August 2017. It also continued to demand the departure from office of President Joseph Kabila by December 2017. On 2 August, the Chairman of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI), Corneille Nangaa, indicated that the date of publication of the electoral calendar would be announced in due course following an assessment to be conducted by CENI, CNSA and the transition Government.

13. On 19 and 20 August, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held its thirty-seventh summit in Pretoria, South Africa. With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, SADC noted several challenges that make the holding of elections by December 2017 unrealistic. SADC also urged CENI to publicize the revised electoral calendar in consultation with the Government and CNSA. Furthermore, the leaders decided to appoint a special envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the light of the political and security situation.

14. In Burundi, the overall situation remains volatile with a climate of latent fear and repression. While the security situation has somewhat improved, no significant progress has been achieved in resolving tensions between the Government and opposition groups. On 15 March, President Pierre Nkurunziza signed a decree establishing a 15-member Commission with a mandate to "review, analyse and recommend provisions of the Constitution to be amended". The Constitutional Review Commission has a six-month mandate, renewable once for a further two-month period. This move fuelled concerns over the future of presidential term limits in the country.

15. Meanwhile, the inter-Burundian dialogue, facilitated by former President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania, and mediated by President Museveni of Uganda on behalf of the East African Community, remained at a

standstill. From 3 to 5 May, the facilitator sent a team to Bujumbura to consult with select stakeholders. Some participants recommended that the dialogue be relocated to Burundi and called for the return of refugees and exiled political leaders.

16. On 5 May, I appointed former President Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso as the Special Envoy for Burundi. He visited the region, including Burundi, from 27 June to 13 July and again from 21 to 25 August for consultations with Burundians and regional stakeholders.

17. The East African Community remained engaged in the search for a solution to the crisis in Burundi. During its eighteenth ordinary summit, held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, on 20 May, President Museveni took over the chairmanship of the organization from President John Magufuli of the United Republic of Tanzania. On 11 June, Mr. Mkapa met President Museveni in Kampala to review progress in the inter-Burundian dialogue.

18. On 20 July, President Magufuli and President Nkurunziza met in Ngara, United Republic of Tanzania, to discuss, inter alia, the revitalization of the inter-Burundian dialogue. Prospects for formal direct talks between the Government and the opposition were subsequently boosted by closed-door consultations in Helsinki between Government and opposition representatives in exile from 31 July to 2 August, facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative. There are indications that the inclusive political dialogue could be restarted within a context of heightened engagements by East African Community leaders. The dire humanitarian situation and continuous deterioration of socioeconomic conditions, which affect neighbouring countries, add a sense of urgency for a solution to the crisis in Burundi.

19. In South Sudan, while fighting between Government and opposition forces continued, some progress was achieved towards the organization of a national dialogue. The National Dialogue Steering Committee and its subcommittees commenced work, including by developing and agreeing on a process and timeline for the dialogue. Key opposition leaders, notably Riek Machar, nevertheless continue to reject the process on the grounds that it is not sufficiently inclusive.

20. In response to the ongoing fighting, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held its thirty-first extraordinary summit on 12 June to discuss the situation in South Sudan. At the summit, IGAD decided, inter alia, to convene a high-level revitalization committee to explore concrete steps towards the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

21. President Museveni also hosted meetings between factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), in a bid to reunite South Sudan's ruling party. Riek Machar's faction of SPLM has not participated in these talks.

C. Humanitarian situation

22. With over 7 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million refugees and asylum seekers, the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region remains dire. Displacements have increased, owing to insecurity and political conflicts in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, compounded by drought in parts of the region.

23. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, approximately 8.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, representing a 16 per cent increase since January 2017. Some 7.7 million people are severely food-insecure countrywide and 43 per cent of children under 5 are chronically malnourished. The number of

internally displaced persons has reached 3.8 million, making the Democratic Republic of the Congo the country most affected by internal displacement in Africa. In addition to internally displacing 1.4 million people, the insecurity in the Kasai region has caused 33,000 Congolese people to cross the border into northern Angola. Spontaneous returns have been recorded since January 2017, including 271,687 returnees in the Kasai region. There are some 621,700 Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosts 541,400 refugees from Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan.

24. In South Sudan, displacement reached unprecedented levels, with over 4 million people uprooted. This number includes over 2 million internally displaced persons, and close to 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries, including in Uganda. Uganda has now become the largest refugee host country in Africa, with approximately 1 million refugees.

25. In the Central African Republic, the humanitarian situation further deteriorated, owing to renewed fighting in several prefectures, bringing the number of internally displaced persons to over 600,000. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local authorities in Bas-Uélé and North Ubangi provinces have reported approximately 65,000 new arrivals from the Central African Republic between mid-May and the end of August, many of whom were located in areas which were extremely difficult to access during the reporting period.

26. In Burundi, insecurity and political instability have continued to displace populations. Some 198,000 Burundians are currently internally displaced, while approximately 407,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Some 2.6 million people, or 23 per cent of the Burundian population, are food insecure. Furthermore, over 5.3 million cases of malaria and 2,415 deaths have been registered since January 2017.

27. Despite increasing needs, humanitarian budgets remain underfunded across the region. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, a $812.5 million appeal has so far attracted only 27 per cent of funding, the lowest level in 10 years. Likewise, the $64.5 million emergency appeal for the Kasai region has attracted only 37 per cent of the target amount to date.

D. Human rights

28. During the reporting period, grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law were reported in several countries, particularly those affected by protracted conflict and political crises, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

29. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, human rights violations continued to be reported, including sexual and gender-based violence committed by security forces and armed groups, as well as illegal detentions, forced disappearances and violations of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. The report on MONUSCO (S/2017/565) provides an extensive account of these human rights violations, most notably in the Kasai region.

30. In response to developments in the Kasai region, on 23 June, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 35/33 on technical assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and accountability concerning the events in the Kasai regions. The Council also proposed the dispatch of international experts to the region. Furthermore, from 13 to 23 June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) deployed a team of human rights

officers to Angola to interview refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The team gathered accounts of incidents that allegedly took place from 12 March to 19 June.

31. On 15 June, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 33/24, briefed the Council on the human rights situation in Burundi, noting with concern the scope and gravity of allegations of human rights violations and abuses. The Commission reported continuing violations, namely torture and cruel or inhumane treatment, extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, forced disappearances and restrictions on civil liberties. The Commission further deplored the lack of criminal accountability, particularly in the light of the persistence of hate speech by State officials and the ruling party's youth group, the Imbonerakure. On 4 September, the Commission released its final report highlighting the above-mentioned violations and abuses committed in Burundi since April 2015, including on whether they may constitute international crimes. It should be noted that the Government of Burundi, despite being a member of the Human Rights Council, had consistently refused to cooperate with the Commission without formal explanation.

32. Meanwhile, the violence in South Sudan showed little sign of abating. Serious human rights violations against civilians, including killings, abductions, rape and destruction of homes, were reported throughout the country. In a report released on 24 July, Amnesty International provided accounts of thousands of cases of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by all parties to the conflict.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

33. As part of the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the National Oversight Mechanism organized a two-day evaluative workshop on 1 and 2 June. The meeting, supported by MONUSCO, was attended by experts from various ministries, the National Oversight Mechanism, civil society organizations and bilateral and multilateral partners. Targeting the three priorities of peace, elections and social welfare, workshop participants articulated recommendations for accelerating progress in these areas. Recommendations called for, inter alia, the passing of relevant national legislation and the mobilization of adequate resources by national institutions. Detailed information on the implementation of the national commitments is contained in the report on MONUSCO (S/2017/565).

B. Commitments of the region

34. During the reporting period, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and SADC collaborated with the United Nations and the African Union to prevent and manage conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

35. On 15 April, President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, as Chair of ICGLR, dispatched his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Kinshasa to encourage President Kabila to continue to reach out to all Congolese stakeholders. Similarly, at the request of President Magufuli, Chair of the SADC Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence, Security and Cooperation, a ministerial delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania visited

Kinshasa from 19 to 22 April to assess the political and security situation and support the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016.

36. On 24 May, the ICGLR Committee of Ministers of Defence met in Luanda to discuss the security situation in the region. The session was preceded by a meeting of Chiefs of Defence Staff and Defence Forces on 23 May. The Committee directed the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of ICGLR to carry out further verifications in areas where former M23 elements are allegedly located. Other recommendations called for strengthening operations against rebel groups and enhancing efforts to repatriate disarmed foreign combatants to their countries of origin. A follow-up meeting of the ICGLR Chiefs of Defence Staff and Defence Forces and SADC member States took place in Luanda on 8 June.

37. Signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework also engaged bilaterally on issues of common interest during the reporting period. There were consultations between the Governments of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the influx of Congolese refugees into Angola, following the outbreak of violence in the Kasai region. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan also worked together to address the presence of members of SPLM/A-IO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

38. The reporting period saw efforts by signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to strengthen economic cooperation. On 30 March, Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania inaugurated the construction of an 80-megawatt dam project at Rusumo Falls, on the Kagera River, which borders the three countries, a development that holds great promise for regional economic integration and conflict reduction.

C. International commitments

39. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), initiated a resource mobilization and awareness drive for the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework. Efforts are ongoing to finalize the submission to the Peacebuilding Fund of a $2 million cross-border project between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, aimed at preventing conflict and managing population displacement. Furthermore, following the Special Envoy's engagement with senior European Union officials in June, the European Union requested the submission of project proposals for the allocation of €1.5 million for the implementation of the Strategic Framework.

40. On 15 and 16 May, the United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region hosted the quarterly meeting of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region in Washington, D.C. After reviewing the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, participants agreed on the importance of coordinated engagement with Congolese stakeholders in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016. Contact Group members also highlighted the need to focus international support on preparations for credible elections. Turning to the situation in Burundi, the Contact Group welcomed the appointment of Michel Kafando as Special Envoy for Burundi and underscored the importance of coherent and coordinated regional and international support to the inter-Burundian dialogue facilitated and mediated by the East African Community.

IV. Implementation of the road map of the Special Envoy

41. During the period under review, the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and his Office undertook a series of activities to coordinate and support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These included steps to strengthen the oversight mechanisms of the Framework, support the neutralization of negative forces, promote peaceful and credible elections and build confidence among leaders in the region.

A. Strengthening the functioning of the oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

42. On 4 May, the Special Envoy convened the 17th meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Naivasha, Kenya, co-chaired by the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, Ibrahima Fall. Participants received updates and exchanged information on the political, security, social and economic situation, including on women and peace and security and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Participants also considered the updated list of priority activities drawn from the Regional Plan of Action, to be submitted to the next meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to be held on 19 October in Brazzaville. The Committee further agreed to carry out a field visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September in order to assess the situation and make recommendations, including on the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of disarmed combatants in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

43. Upon the conclusion of the 17th meeting, the Special Envoy and the Special Representative of the African Union convened a retreat of the Technical Support Committee on 4 and 5 May. Participants made recommendations on strengthening the national structures tasked with implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework; monitoring in-country follow-ups; and increasing visibility and ownership of the Framework.

44. The Technical Support Committee carried out its second field visit to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from 7 to 10 September. Committee members met local authorities, other stakeholders, including civil society representatives, and MONUSCO officials. They visited transit camps housing former FDLR combatants in Kanyabayonga, North Kivu province; Kalungu, South Kivu province; and Kisangani, Tshopo province. Furthermore, the Committee briefly met a delegation representing SPLM/A-IO members currently cantoned in a MONUSCO transit camp near Goma. The delegation also interacted with local officials and communities in Beni, North Kivu province, with regard to the security threat posed by the Allied Democratic Forces. Representatives of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework participated in the field visit in order to, inter alia, engage the women in the transit camps, as well as those in communities affected by the activities of armed groups.

45. Following the field visit, the Technical Support Committee held its 18th meeting in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 11 September. Drawing on its findings during the field visit, the Committee adopted a set of recommendations to be tabled at the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. These include a call to: (a) increase military pressure on negative forces in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by, inter alia, strengthening the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade; (b) take decisive steps to complete the repatriation to Rwanda of disarmed FDLR combatants currently in transit camps in Kanyabayonga,

Kisangani and Walungu; and (c) take similar steps to swiftly repatriate the ex-M23 combatants still in Uganda and Rwanda.

46. On 17 July, the Special Envoy met the African Union Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cesouma, in Addis Ababa. The Chairperson called on the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to provide unwavering support to the political agreement of 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to the situation in Burundi, the Chairperson called on regional leaders to strongly support the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue.

47. On 2 August, the Special Envoy met President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo. The two discussed pressing regional issues, including the preparation of the next meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to be held in Brazzaville on 19 October.

B. Good offices of the Special Envoy

48. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy continued to deliver good offices, in coordination with national, regional and international partners.

Implementation of the Nairobi Declarations

49. The Special Envoy advocated the resumption of consultations between the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the former M23 rebel group. These consultations began in 2016 under the auspices of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. From 20 to 22 March, the Special Envoy visited Kampala for separate consultations with the Ugandan authorities and the political leadership of the former M23. During that meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Sam Kutesa, encouraged the convening of a special summit of Heads of State of the region on the neutralization of negative forces.

50. During a meeting with the Special Envoy on 21 March, the political leader of the former M23, Bertrand Bisimwa, rejected allegations that the group intended to launch a new rebellion. Encouraged by the Special Envoy, Mr. Bisimwa issued a memo on 22 March, in which he reaffirmed that the former M23 remained committed to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations.

51. Subsequently, the Special Envoy visited Kinshasa from 27 to 30 March. The Minister for Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Crispin Atama, confirmed that elements of the former M23 that had infiltrated the country from Uganda had left Congolese territory. He reaffirmed the readiness of the Government to receive those former M23 members who wished to return peacefully to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

52. In a meeting with the Special Envoy on 28 March, the Coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism, General Denis Kalume Numbi, reiterated the need for good-faith assurances by former M23 leaders in order to resume joint consultations. He also reiterated the view, communicated in a letter to the Special Envoy and the Special Representative on 14 March, that former M23 elements who had been involved in clashes with FARDC in January 2017 were no longer covered by the amnesty provision contained in the Nairobi Declarations.

53. The Special Envoy returned to Uganda on 13 September. He held consultations with President Museveni and other Ugandan authorities on political and security developments in the region, notably challenges related to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former M23 elements to the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. The Minister for Defence of Uganda, Adolf Mwesigye, confirmed that, given the lack of progress in the repatriation process, the Government of Uganda had decided to consult with UNHCR with a view to granting refugee status to eligible ex-M23 members present in Uganda. He acknowledged, however, that some legal challenges would need to be addressed in that regard.

Regional consultations on Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

54. The Special Envoy, in consultation with the Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, engaged regional and international stakeholders for solutions to the continued presence of SPLM/A-IO elements on MONUSCO premises. In a follow-up to his first visit to Juba on 6 and 7 February, the Special Envoy returned to Juba to meet President Salva Kiir on 4 September. The Special Envoy highlighted the regional implications of the persisting crisis in South Sudan and encouraged continued efforts to forge peace and national unity through the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, as well as an inclusive and transparent national dialogue. Discussing the situation of the members of SPLM/A-IO on MONUSCO premises, President Kiir called for their return under the amnesty he had granted in 2016.

55. Meanwhile, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, supported by MONUSCO, successfully repatriated eight members of SPLM/A-IO, who had expressed the wish to return to South Sudan. Furthermore, MONUSCO, together with relevant United Nations agencies, explored individual and group solutions for the SPLM/A-IO members present in the camp. As of early August, 58 individuals had been resettled at their request in Ethiopia, Kenya and the Sudan.

Support to dialogue and political processes in the region

56. The Special Envoy continued his good offices and advocacy in support of dialogue processes in the region, in line with Security Council resolution 2348 (2017).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

57. During his visit to Kinshasa from 27 to 30 March, the Special Envoy, together with MONUSCO senior officials, held a series of consultations with Congolese stakeholders to support the finalization of the Arrangements particuliers for the 31 December 2016 political agreement. During these engagements, the Special Envoy stressed the centrality of the 31 December agreement for the holding of peaceful and credible elections, and called for sustained commitment by all parties to achieve agreement on outstanding issues.

58. Noting the importance of concerted regional and international support to the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Special Envoy visited Brazzaville and Luanda from 26 to 28 April, where he met the President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo and the Vice-President of Angola, Manuel Vicente, respectively. President Sassou Nguesso encouraged joint engagement by the United Nations and the African Union to ensure the full implementation of the 31 December agreement, and for the conduct of peaceful and credible elections in the country. Vice-President Vicente expressed concern about the security and humanitarian situation in the Kasai region and its impact on Angola. He also affirmed his country's readiness to take part, in its capacity as Chair of ICGLR, in initiatives with other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

59. Subsequently, at the initiative of the Special Envoy, a delegation of senior representatives of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework visited Kinshasa on 29 and 30 May. The team included the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Georges Chikoti (on behalf of the ICGLR Chair); the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui; the Special Envoy; the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and representatives of SADC. The purpose of the mission was to encourage Congolese stakeholders to remain engaged in the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 and in the preparations for credible and peaceful elections. The delegation also discussed the security situation in the Kasai region and its regional impact.

60. Following the visit by the guarantors, representatives of the presidential majority and the faction of the Rassemblement, led by Felix Tshisekedi, met on 7 June in the presence of the Special Representative to discuss the implementation of the agreement.

61. The Special Envoy subsequently met the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, Augustine Mahiga, in Dar es Salaam on 14 June. He briefed the Minister on the outcome of the guarantors' visit to Kinshasa and encouraged continuing coordination of messages over the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement.

62. The Special Envoy returned to Kinshasa from 30 August to 2 September, to discuss with the Congolese authorities additional measures that could be taken by the United Nations to support the national investigation into the killing of two members of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kananga, Kasai province in March of 2017 (see S/2017/713). The mission was in follow-up to a meeting that I held with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 17 August. During the Special Envoy's visit, the Congolese authorities agreed that a United Nations team, led by a senior official, should be embedded within the Congolese investigative team, to help broaden and deepen the investigation.

Support for peaceful elections in Kenya

63. From 12 to 14 June, a Director-level joint Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, UNDP and OHCHR mission was dispatched to Kenya to assess the country's electoral preparedness and to consider actions that the United Nations could take in support of peaceful and credible elections in the country. As a result, it was agreed that a joint task force would be established under the leadership of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, bringing together staff from the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Office of the Special Envoy, UNDP, OHCHR and the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, together with the Special Envoy and the Resident Coordinator, engaged a wide range of national and international stakeholders with a view to promoting a peaceful electoral process.

64. Following an outbreak of pockets of violence in some parts of the country in reaction to the announcement of the presidential results, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi publicly called for calm and restraint and encouraged the use of legal means envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya to address election-related disputes. She also urged the acting Minister for Interior, Fred Matiang'i, to call for restraint in the response by state security agents to post-election protests.

65. On 1 September 2017, the Supreme Court of Kenya ruled that the presidential election held on 8 August was not conducted in accordance with the Constitution

and applicable laws, thereby rendering the results declared by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission "invalid, null and void". The Commission was directed to organize a fresh election within 60 days, as stipulated in the Constitution. Subsequently, the Commission set 26 October for a fresh presidential election, with only President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga on the ballot.

Natural resources

66. In follow-up to the decision by the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Luanda on 26 October 2016, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Executive Secretary, Zachary Muburi-Muita, convened the Regional Experts and Stakeholders Consultation on Natural Resources and Good Governance for Sustainable Peace, Development and Transformation of the Great Lakes region, in Nairobi on 5 and 6 July.

67. For the first time, a wide range of stakeholders, including experts, representatives of governments of the region, the mining industry and trade, civil society, and bilateral and multilateral partners, agreed on recommendations to enhance support to the ICGLR Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and address illicit financial flows to negative forces in the region. Discussions revealed the need for urgent action to tackle the illegal exportation of gold. Participants also discussed measures to curb the activities of criminal networks involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

68. On 4 August, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Executive Secretary briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the outcome of the experts meeting, including the need for joint action to improve the governance of natural resources in the Great Lakes region.

Promotion of women, youth and civil society

69. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy engaged stakeholders on supporting the participation of women in peace, political and development processes in the region. On 15 June, the Special Envoy chaired the eighth meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The meeting reviewed recent developments related to the participation of women in peace and dialogue processes. Furthermore, the Office of the Special Envoy continued consultations with signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework on steps to ensure the implementation of the Goma Declaration of the Women's Platform, endorsed by the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Luanda on 26 October 2016.

70. As a follow-up to a special summit of Heads of State on the fight against youth unemployment through infrastructure development and investment promotion, held in 2014 by ICGLR, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Secretariat jointly facilitated a meeting on youth in Livingstone, Zambia, from 7 to 9 June. The event included a meeting of experts, which gathered 50 youth delegates from ICGLR member States and national and international policy experts, followed by a ministerial meeting on 9 June. Ministers for Youth from the region in attendance agreed on the need for a coordinated and participatory approach to promoting youth employment, and endorsed a 2017-2022 regional strategy for the implementation of the recommendations of the special summit.

Implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017

71. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy, in close coordination with respective United Nations country teams, continued to steward efforts towards the operationalization of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017.

72. On 13 July, the Special Envoy convened the second coordination meeting with Resident Coordinators from the countries covered by the Strategic Framework (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). The aim of the meeting was to share the political, security and humanitarian developments in the region and discuss implications for United Nations engagement in support of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. They agreed to continue to enhance cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and United Nations country teams.

73. On 14 July, the Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, convened the first meeting of the Management Board of the Strategic Framework. The Management Board discussed progress made towards its implementation and agreed to accelerate the process, including on resource mobilization.

74. Also on 14 July, the Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group convened the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Great Lakes cross-border multi-partner trust fund, mandated to provide oversight and ensure accountability of the trust fund. It approved the terms of reference of the trust fund, and discussed planned programmes and projects and a funding mechanism for the secretariat of the Strategic Framework.

75. The Office of the Special Envoy promoted and facilitated with the Regional United Nations Development Group the implementation of the Strategic Framework, including synchronizing the cross-border projects of relevant United Nations funds and agencies ranging from sustainable natural resources management to the rule of law.

Partnerships with regional organizations, governments and other United Nations entities

76. The Office of the Special Envoy achieved progress in enhancing partnerships with regional and international stakeholders to strengthen support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

77. On 24 March, the Special Envoy met the World Bank Country Director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo, Ahmadou Moustapha Ndiaye. They agreed to focus cooperation on displacement, youth, gender, natural resources management and the second Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes region. They also agreed to convene a United Nations-World Bank Group regional meeting later in 2017, to enhance cooperation and coordination in these areas in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

78. On 8 and 9 May, the Office of the Special Envoy held a third coordination meeting with the ICGLR Secretariat in Bujumbura. Participants reviewed the status of cooperation between the two entities and agreed on steps to ensure implementation of joint activities, including on political engagement, natural resource management, women, youth and judicial cooperation in the Great Lakes region. As a follow-up to this meeting, the Office of the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Secretariat renewed their memorandum of understanding on 20 July 2017 to facilitate cooperation and joint activities in the implementation of their respective mandates.

79. On 27 and 28 June, the Government of Switzerland and the Office of the Special Envoy organized the third retreat for Special Envoys and Experts, in Geneva, in partnership with the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. The meeting gathered experts, Special Envoys from the Great Lakes region and senior representatives from the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

80. The meeting discussed peace and security developments in the region, with a focus on the prevention of mass atrocities and strengthening the efforts of the international community for conflict prevention and resolution in the Great Lakes region. Following the retreat, the Special Envoy convened a meeting with other Envoys to discuss collaboration and coordination of actions. In particular, they agreed on the need to jointly engage the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on ways to support political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

81. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Envoy and MONUSCO deployed liaison officers to Nairobi and Kinshasa, respectively, with the aim to ensure enhanced coordination and synchronization in the implementation of the complementary aspects of the respective mandates of the two missions. Following the decisions of the first retreat between the two missions held earlier this year, the liaison officers coordinated the development of a workplan in support of joint activities and the good offices of the Special Envoy and the Special Representative.

82. As part of efforts to strengthen collaboration with regional organizations and other United Nations entities, the Office of the Special Envoy participated in consultations on peace and security issues in the Central Africa region, organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa on 23 and 24 March and on 31 July and 1 August. The meetings provided the opportunity to review peace, security and development challenges at the subregional and country levels and to take stock of ongoing and future initiatives, including in the area of preventive diplomacy in cooperation with subregional organizations including the Economic Community of Central African States and civil society groups.

V. Observations and recommendations

83. Four major challenges to peace and security in the region were prevalent during the reporting period, often resulting in humanitarian crises. These included (a) stalled political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; (b) the increasing activities of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic; (c) civil conflict in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and attendant humanitarian crises; and (d) tensions around electoral processes in the region. These challenges and attendant regional dynamics negatively affected the resolve of Member States resolve regarding the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and seriously threatened to erode the gains recorded on achieving sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

84. Robust and sustained actions are therefore required if the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is to deliver on its promises. As an immediate step, I encourage the Heads of State and Government of the region to review the implementation of past decisions on the threats posed by armed groups and on the repatriation of former combatants to third countries. The forthcoming meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism will be an opportunity to discuss these and other issues. My Special Envoy and my Special Representative, in close collaboration with ICGLR and SADC, will pursue consultations with stakeholders to ensure that

specific recommendations on these issues are submitted for the consideration of the Heads of State of the region.

85. With regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former M23 elements still present in Uganda and Rwanda, I reiterate my appeal to the Congolese authorities and the leadership of the former M23 to resume joint consultations under the auspices of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The United Nations remains fully committed to this process. I urge all stakeholders to demonstrate continued determination to achieve progress in this regard. While commending the role of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in resolving the M23 rebellion, only the effective implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former combatants from these two countries will result in durable solutions.

86. Lasting solutions should also be found for the situation of ex-combatants of the SPLM-A/IO cantoned near Goma. In this regard, I welcome the spirit of collaboration displayed by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, with the support of MONUSCO and the Office of my Special Envoy, on the progress achieved thus far. I call on all regional actors to support these efforts.

87. I welcome the successful organization by the Office of my Special Envoy and ICGLR of the Regional Experts and Stakeholders Consultation on Natural Resources and Good Governance for Sustainable Peace, Development and Transformation of the Great Lakes Region, held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 July. It is encouraging to note the increased cooperation between ICGLR and other partners on strengthening the ICGLR Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. I also welcome other recommendations from the consultations on addressing illegal exploitation and trade in minerals, including gold, and undercutting financial flows to illegal armed groups.

88. Conflicts in eastern and western Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan have had severe consequences for the most vulnerable populations, generating renewed displacements and placing increasing strain on host countries and communities. I commend, in this regard, the efforts of those countries assisting victims of conflict. During my visit to Uganda on 21 June, for the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, I witnessed what can be described as the biggest refugee exodus in Africa since the Rwandan genocide. I reiterate my appeal to the international community and the donor community at large to support humanitarian action in the region, in order to help address the needs of, and find durable solutions for, refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and their host communities.

89. To end the suffering of people, we must first step up our efforts to address the root causes of conflicts in the region through collaborative efforts between countries in the region and the wider international community. I therefore welcome the efforts spearheaded by my Special Envoy and the Regional United Nations Development Group in the context of the Strategic Framework. I take this opportunity to thank countries and multilateral institutions for their generous contributions and pledges to the trust fund of the Framework.

90. As we pursue efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to understand the role of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding. Recalling the decision by Heads of States and Government at the meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Luanda on 26 October 2016, to direct their national institutions to follow up on the implementation of the declaration made by the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Goma in 2014, I encourage my Special Envoy, in conjunction with

ICGLR, to pursue efforts with relevant actors to ensure the effective advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

91. I reiterate my appeal for the ongoing dialogue and political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to reach successful conclusions and contribute to lasting stability in the region. I welcome the continued efforts of the East African Community on the dialogue process in Burundi, including the facilitation efforts by former President Mkapa and the renewed engagements of President Magufuli of the United Republic of Tanzania and President Museveni of Uganda. My Special Envoy for Burundi will continue to lead and coordinate United Nations efforts and engage national and regional stakeholders in full support of the East African Community-led inter-Burundi dialogue.

92. I call on all stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to remain committed to the political process and engaged in efforts to ensure the faithful implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement. This will pave the way for peaceful and credible elections, as a basis for lasting peace and stability in the country. My Special Representative, supported by my Special Envoy, will continue his efforts to assist the parties.

93. I also call upon the Commission électorale nationale indépendante to ensure the swift publication of the electoral calendar, and complete voter registration in the Kasai and Kasai Central provinces as well as in the territories of Luilu and Kamiji in Lomami province. I call upon the Parliament to adopt the organic law on the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord et du processus électoral and amendments to the electoral law with urgency and to expedite the adoption of the annex to the amended electoral law on the distribution of seats immediately upon the conclusion of the voter registration process.

94. I encourage the continued engagement by guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework following their successful visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May 2017. My Special Envoy will continue to promote coordinated regional and international engagement with Congolese stakeholders in support of preparations for peaceful and credible elections in the country.

95. As I indicated in my initial address to the Security Council, trust between governments and citizens is key to promoting peace and stability. While I welcome ongoing efforts towards peaceful and credible elections in most countries, I remain concerned that disagreements over electoral processes in parts of the Great Lakes region have led to political instability and violence, as a result of either continuous delays or disputed outcomes.

96. Elections should be a moment of celebration of democracy and an opportunity for peaceful debate, without violence or instability. In view of recurring electoral challenges in the Great Lakes region, I request my Special Envoy, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, to engage stakeholders, including governments, civil society groups and regional organizations, on ways to address the root causes of election-related violence.

97. I thank my Special Envoy and his Office, my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, and the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely the African Union, ICGLR and SADC. I call upon the Security Council and the international community at large to remain engaged and support efforts to achieve long-term stability in the Great Lakes region.

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Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. In its resolution 2348 (2017), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), examining the continued relevance of all mandated tasks, priorities and related resources, as well as the necessity of adapting the Mission's mandate to the specific needs of the post-elections phase, with a view to: (a) providing the Council with options, no later than 30 September 2017, for a reduction of the Mission's force and civilian components in order to maximize the efficient use of the Mission's resources, to be delivered after the successful implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, and sustainable progress in reducing the threat of armed groups, taking into account the Mission's and the United Nations country team's comparative advantages and capacities and other relevant factors, with a view to transferring relevant activities to the country team and other relevant partners, as appropriate; and (b) in the light of the reaction of the Council to those options and following the successful implementation of the 31 December agreement, providing advice to the Council on an exit strategy in advance of the next mandate renewal.

2. The strategic review of MONUSCO builds on continuing efforts to streamline the work of the Mission and achieve efficiency gains, while taking into consideration political and security developments, available resources and the need to mitigate the impact of the adjustments on the civilian population. The present report is the result of extensive consultations with a wide range of Congolese stakeholders over a period of four months. In the present report, recommendations are provided on the strategic priorities of MONUSCO and corresponding adjustments to the Mission's posture and configuration during the current, pre-electoral phase, as well as options for a broader reconfiguration of the Mission during the post-election period, subject to the evolution of the political and security situation. Preliminary elements of a potential exit strategy are also identified.

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B. Methodology

3. The strategic review began in May 2017 as a joint exercise between the field presence and United Nations Headquarters, led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and under the overall guidance of an integrated task force. The review followed the methodology prescribed in the United Nations Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning and was structured in three phases.

4. The first phase was dedicated to producing a conflict analysis as the basis for determining the priorities of the United Nations and MONUSCO in the current period and following the implementation of the 31 December agreement. In that regard, three broad scenarios were identified: (a) successful implementation of the 31 December agreement, albeit with a delayed timeline (best case scenario); (b) incomplete implementation of the agreement (status quo); and (c) the collapse of the agreement (worst case scenario).

5. In the second phase, further consultations were held with the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, Security Council members, troop- and police-contributing countries, United Nations system agencies and subject matter experts, including through a workshop organized by the International Peace Institute and the Stimson Centre. A principal-level meeting was also held to validate the conflict analysis and agree on the broad parameters for the subsequent phases of the review.

6. In the third phase, a multidisciplinary review team, led by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and comprising senior representatives of key Secretariat departments and members of the integrated task force, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 28 July to 7 August 2017. The team travelled to Kinshasa, Kananga, in Kasai Central Province, and Goma and Katale, in North Kivu Province. The review team consulted MONUSCO counterparts, the United Nations country team, national and provincial government officials, the leadership of the national security forces, members of the Independent National Electoral Commission, representatives of the presidential majority and the opposition, civil society organizations, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, the diplomatic corps and officials of the African Union, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie in the country.

II. Key findings

A. Overview of the situation

7. The slow, incomplete and non-inclusive implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, coupled with a worsening socioeconomic context and increased repression by the national security forces, have fuelled discontent in the capital and the country's main urban centres. In the provinces, the manipulation of armed militias and ethnic tensions by a range of State actors and spoilers has contributed to a resurgence of intercommunal violence and the multiplication of conflict hotspots across the country over the past year and a half, including in the central and western Democratic Republic of the Congo, from where the Mission had withdrawn in recent years as the security situation improved.

8. Against this backdrop, there has been a sharp increase in human rights violations, which often go uninvestigated and unpunished. The Democratic Republic of the Congo also faces a vast humanitarian challenge, on a scale unprecedented over the past 10 years, with 3.8 million people — mostly women and children — internally displaced and 8.5 million in need of assistance. With no prospect of

elections taking place in 2017, the relative respite provided by the signing of the agreement is unlikely to last beyond the end of the year, potentially leading to an escalation of political tensions and rising insecurity, with adverse consequences for the human rights and humanitarian situation and likely repercussions for the region.

1. Implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement

9. The broad consensus underpinning the 31 December agreement has been steadily eroded by a lack of trust between the signatory parties and the increasing disaffection of the Congolese population with the political class as a whole. Opposition leaders, representatives of civil society and religious leaders deplored the non-consensual nomination of two members of a dissident faction of the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement as Prime Minister and Chair of the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process as a demonstration of the broader scheme of the presidential majority to subvert the implementation of the agreement. By contrast, members of the Government and the presidential majority argued that the agreement was being implemented and lamented the fact that the wing of the Rassemblement led by Félix Tshisekedi had not only refused to engage constructively in the designation of the Prime Minister (the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, had requested that three names be submitted to him, while the Rassemblement was willing to put forward only one name), but also boycotted the subsequent consultation process leading to the appointment of the Chair of the National Council.

10. Despite the deep divergences within the Congolese political class, interlocutors on all sides, overall, reaffirmed the centrality of the agreement as the only viable framework for resolving the current crisis. In that regard, key government officials and members of the presidential majority insisted that Mr. Kabila had no intention of modifying the Constitution or seeking a third term, adding that they saw no need for him to publicly state what was already enshrined in both the agreement and the Constitution. They stressed that, in line with the ruling of the Constitutional Court on the implementation of article 70 of the Constitution, Mr. Kabila would remain in office until such time as his successor was elected. Opposition members stated, however, that they would not recognize the President beyond 31 December 2017, and many warned against what they saw as an elaborate plan to extend de facto Mr. Kabila's term in office well beyond 2017.

Electoral timetable

11. There was broad recognition across the range of interlocutors consulted by the review team that the time frame for elections set in the 31 December agreement would not be met, as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union both acknowledged in recent communiqués. Key opposition figures indicated that they would be willing to accept the holding of elections beyond the end of 2017, provided that concrete steps were taken immediately to demonstrate the commitment of the authorities to the completion of the electoral process.

12. The Independent National Electoral Commission stressed that the delayed completion of the voter registration process resulting from the prevailing insecurity in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces since August 2016 had posed a major setback. Nevertheless, the Commission was confident that, thanks to the improved security situation in those two provinces of the Kasai region, voter registration could begin. Even then, the Commission warned that there were major financial and logistical constraints that still needed to be overcome, which would have a bearing on the time frame.

13. The Commission also pointed out that the time frame agreed to by the signatories of the 31 December agreement had always been at odds with what it considered to be technically feasible. In that regard, the Commission had identified November 2018 as a realistic election date during the dialogue facilitated by the African Union that culminated in the signing of the agreement of 18 October 2016, which was eventually superseded by the 31 December agreement. Nevertheless, the Commission was mindful of the opposition's lack of confidence in the electoral process and acknowledged that any electoral calendar issued without the involvement of the United Nations and other international and regional partner organizations would be viewed with suspicion.

Confidence-building measures

14. Opposition leaders and representatives of civil society emphasized that little progress had been made in implementing the confidence-building measures envisaged in the 31 December agreement, which are essential to the creation of an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, 170 persons remain in detention for having expressed their political opinions or exercised their constitutional rights. A general ban on demonstrations remains in place across the country.

15. On the other hand, key government officials maintained that the confidence-building measures were being implemented, as the President had signed decrees authorizing the liberation of political prisoners. The Minister of Justice contended that the so-called pending cases related to individuals charged with criminal offences not linked to their political activities. These, he added, could not be addressed in the context of the confidence-building measures foreseen by the agreement.

16. Overall, the review team was of the view that the measures taken by the Government fell far short of what the agreement provides for. The team repeatedly stressed to its government interlocutors the importance of taking the issue forward with good faith to defuse the prevailing tension and create a more conducive environment. Beyond the specific measures, it was felt that all sides needed to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from actions likely to inflame the situation.

2. Security situation

17. Since 2016, the overall security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated as conflict patterns have shifted and new hotspots have emerged around the country. Disputes over access to resources and land, intercommunal conflicts, ethnic grievances, poor governance, eroding State authority and legitimacy, the absence of the rule of law and a worsening socioeconomic situation remain key drivers of conflict in the country. However, all interlocutors were in agreement that the current political impasse and the continued uncertainty around the electoral timetable are fuelling much of the insecurity witnessed across the country over the past year.

Armed groups

18. The past year has seen a continued reduction in the strength of the main foreign armed groups still present in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of sustained military pressure from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) and MONUSCO and the Mission's ongoing disarmament, demobilization,

repatriation, resettlement and reintegration operations. Nevertheless, these groups still pose a threat to the civilian population in the areas in which they operate.

19. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) — albeit weakened by repeated military operations and internal divisions — maintain the largest number of combatants, ranging between 700 and 1,200 fighters, and are continuing their collaboration with Congolese armed groups in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. A number of Rwandan refugees are being pressured by FDLR not to register, preventing those who wish to return to Rwanda from doing so.

20. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), operating in the Beni area of North Kivu Province, currently have an estimated strength of between 250 and 350 combatants. Although ADF have not carried out targeted and systematic attacks against civilians since the beginning of 2017, they have conducted sporadic attacks against civilian populations and settlements in recent weeks, albeit of a much lower intensity in comparison with the trends in the past year.

21. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has fewer than 100 combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who continue to move between the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The recent departure of the Uganda People's Defence Forces troops that had been deployed in the Central African Republic as part of the African Union-led regional task force, and of the troops from the United States of America that had been supporting them, has led to an upsurge in attacks by LRA against civilians in Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé Provinces.

22. The Forces nationales de libération, which operate in the southern tip of South Kivu Province, have around 300 combatants and pose a latent threat. The recent crisis in Burundi has seen the emergence of other groups that use the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a base for their operations.

23. By contrast, there has been an increase in the number and strength of Congolese armed groups, which operate over a wider geographical area. They include the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI), which has 300-400 combatants; the Nduma défense du Congo-Renové in North Kivu, which has 200-350 combatants; and Mai-Mai Kata Katanga, which has 200 combatants. Repeated attempts by the Government to negotiate the surrender of those armed groups have failed.

24. There has been a worrying proliferation of Mai-Mai groups across North and South Kivu Provinces, which has been facilitated, to some extent, by the sudden vacuum created by the redeployment of FARDC to address the security crisis in the Kasai region. Many of the groups, some of which amount to little more than criminal gangs, are supported by political and State actors. Some have espoused ethnic or anti-Government agendas and have attempted to form coalitions. New alliances of armed groups, such as the Mouvement national pour la révolution, in North Kivu, and the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo, in South Kivu, seem to be deliberately targeting the Congolese security forces and symbols of State authority.

Local and ethnic conflicts

25. The upsurge in violent ethnic and local conflicts observed in several areas across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the recently relatively stable western provinces of the country, is a major cause for concern. While the conflicts reflect long-standing tensions, politicians from across the political

spectrum, as well as individuals with a track record of fomenting violence to advance their individual agendas, have played a part in fuelling these conflicts.

26. In North Kivu Province, violent incidents have pitted armed groups from the Hutu and Nande communities against one another. These armed groups, which were formed along ethnic lines, have carried out ethnically motivated attacks against civilians, resulting in dozens killed or wounded and villages burnt down.

27. In Tanganyika Province, clashes between the Luba and Twa communities have led to large-scale atrocities and the destruction of villages and camps hosting refugees and internally displaced populations. Equipped with traditional weapons, rival militias have raided each other's villages in a continuing spiral of revenge attacks, prompting thousands to flee. The fighting risks spreading to other ethnic communities and areas in the province.

28. In the Kasai region, the Kamuina Nsapu militia has committed large-scale abuses and launched attacks against State actors and symbols, schools and churches in at least four provinces in the region. In addition to clashing with the security forces, Kamuina Nsapu elements, some of whom have ties to the Luba and Lulua communities, have also fought against the Bana Mura militia, which generally comprises members of the Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela communities. The Bana Mura has received support from prominent political figures in Kasai Province and has allegedly received weapons from State security forces and local chiefs. The worst of the violence was witnessed in certain parts of Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, where close to 90 mass graves were discovered in recent months.

29. The situation, however, appeared to have had a relative respite during the visit of the review team. The conflict has triggered a large-scale humanitarian crisis: 1.4 million people have been internally displaced, of whom 850,000 are children and 52 per cent are women or girls, while 31,278 people have fled across the border into Angola; 1,878 children, including 658 girls, have been separated from the militias since the beginning of the conflict. In Kananga, representatives of civil society underscored the need to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need and stressed the importance of ensuring that those responsible for the crimes committed over the past year and a half are brought to justice so that the process of healing can begin among affected communities.

30. In Kongo Central and Kinshasa, the Bundu Dia Kongo/Bundu Dia Mayala movement, a politico-religious group originating from Kongo Central Province and led by a parliamentarian, Ne Muanda Nsemi, has targeted strategic facilities and attacked the Congolese security forces. Mr. Nsemi has repeatedly called on the President to step down, while also inciting violence against "Rwandans", a reference to Kinyarwanda speakers from the Hutu and Tutsi communities. On 7 August 2017, violence perpetrated by the group in Kinshasa and neighbouring Kongo Central resulted in the deaths of 70 people.

3. Human rights

31. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, since the beginning of 2016 there has been a sharp increase in the total number of human rights violations perpetrated across the Democratic Republic of the Congo; 2,822 human rights violations were documented during the first half of 2017, in comparison with 2,343 over the same period in 2016. This deterioration is a direct result of widespread violations of civil and political rights in a context of shrinking democratic space, the excessive use of force by the national security forces and the increase in local conflicts and inter-ethnic violence.

32. The national security forces are an increasing source of insecurity for the civilian population. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, 57 per cent of the human rights violations documented since the beginning of 2017 can be attributed to State agents. The national security forces have used disproportionate force in the context of shrinking democratic space and widespread impunity and have fuelled the conflict in certain areas of the Kasai region through widespread acts of violence affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure and support for proxy militias. They have also committed an increasing number of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. The problem is compounded by the long-standing practice of integrating former members of armed groups into FARDC without proper vetting.

33. Armed groups and militias have continued to commit serious human rights violations. Overall, FRPI and Mai-Mai combatants are the principal perpetrators of human rights violations in the conflict-affected areas. Of particular concern is the human rights situation in the Kasai region, where the Kamuina Nsapu militia has committed brutal crimes, including killing, maiming, sexual violence, widespread destruction and the recruitment, use and abduction of children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals. In Tanganyika Province, militia groups have also committed serious abuses against the population; the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office has confirmed 21 cases of rape committed by Twa militias since the beginning of 2017.

34. In meetings with the review team, several key government officials reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations, including members of the security forces, are brought to justice. Nevertheless, high-profile trials of members of ADF and FARDC in North Kivu Province and members of Kamuina Nsapu and FARDC in Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental Provinces did not lead to the conviction of officials bearing command responsibility for the crimes committed. While the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs reassured the review team of the Government's continued readiness to collaborate with the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, he also deplored what he described as "systematic accusations" levelled by international actors against the national security forces and underscored the need for the United Nations to show greater respect for the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4. Humanitarian and socioeconomic situation

35. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa, with over 10 per cent of the country's population in need of humanitarian assistance. There are 3.8 million internally displaced persons, of whom 2 million are women or girls, while the country hosts over half a million refugees from Rwanda, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi. Food security has deteriorated sharply; 7.7 million people, including 5.2 million children, were facing an acute food insecurity and livelihood crisis as of June 2017, compared with 5.9 million people in June 2016. While humanitarian needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have continued to increase over the past year, funding shortages and restrictions on access owing to logistical, political and security issues have seriously hampered the humanitarian response. The degree of violence and insecurity in the country is reflected in part by the number of Congolese who have sought refugee status in neighbouring countries, requiring a humanitarian response at the regional level. At present, there are over 621,700 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the region, representing the third largest refugee caseload in Africa, with recent influxes into Angola and Zambia.

36. The plight of the population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is compounded by extreme poverty and a deepening economic crisis. The Democratic Republic of the Congo ranks 176th out of 188 countries in the human development index and forty-eighth out of 54 countries on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Eighty-two per cent of the population lives below the absolute poverty line of $1.25 per day per person, which represents one of the highest poverty rates in the world. The inflation rate is expected to reach 52 per cent by the end of 2017. As the Minister of Finance explained to the review team, if left unaddressed, the current situation could easily trigger widespread unrest across the country. The Government was therefore taking steps to increase domestic revenue.

B. Assessment of the Mission's activities under the current mandate

37. In its resolution 2348 (2017), the Security Council extended the mandate of MONUSCO until 31 March 2018 and decided that the Mission's strategic priorities would be to contribute to the protection of civilians and support for the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. The Mission was also mandated to carry out other tasks relating to human rights; gender mainstreaming and women, peace and security; children and armed conflict; rule of law and justice support; disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration and security sector reform; and stabilization.

38. The interlocutors of the review team were unanimous in acknowledging the contribution of MONUSCO to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Most actors in the opposition and civil society, both in Kinshasa and the provinces, expressed deep concern over the reduction of the Mission's authorized troop and police ceilings in the current political and security context. By contrast, key government officials felt that further troop reductions were warranted in areas where the security situation had improved and called for the pace in the strategic dialogue to be accelerated and for the force to be adjusted to better address what they referred to as "asymmetric" threats, a view shared by some civil society actors.

39. On the political front, my Special Representative has continued to provide his good offices to the signatories of the 31 December agreement in a context of deep mistrust between the Government and the opposition. Interlocutors on both sides of the political divide expressed their appreciation to the review team for the efforts of the Special Representative, although it is clear that greater political will from both sides remains essential to move the political process forward, as is enhanced regional engagement backed by a united Security Council.

40. MONUSCO, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has played a critical role in supporting the voter registration process, whose successful completion remains a prerequisite for the holding of credible elections. Women make up 48 per cent of the 40 million voters registered to date in a country in which they have historically been excluded from political processes and currently occupy less than 10 per cent of all public offices. All interlocutors were in agreement that the continued logistical and technical support of the Mission, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2348 (2017) and in close cooperation with other regional and international partners, remains critical to ensure the holding of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections.

41. The review team found that over the past six months, the Mission has made a concerted effort to achieve its priority objectives in a shifting security landscape that has placed a major strain on its limited resources. The reduction of 8.5 per cent in the Mission's budget for 2017/18, which necessitated cuts to MONUSCO military, police and civilian personnel, have further constrained the Mission's

ability, as configured currently, to effectively deliver on its core protection of civilians mandate in a country roughly the size of Western Europe in which the army and police are poorly paid, are often manipulated by State actors for their own ends and, at times, pose, through their abuses, a significant threat to the population, compounding the challenges linked to the activities of the armed groups they are supposed to combat.

42. Further progress has been made towards transforming the MONUSCO force into a more agile, flexible and responsive tool, including by "unlocking" the Intervention Brigade of the force from the Beni area. In recent months, the Intervention Brigade has undertaken operations against FDLR and has repulsed a number of attacks by Mai-Mai across North Kivu. Some progress has also been made towards removing caveats and amending Statements of Unit Requirements to give the Force Commander the latitude to employ forces where they are most required. To that end, sector boundaries have been redrawn to reflect the changing security environment and allow for the increased mobility of troops without the requirement for advance consultation with concerned troop-contributing countries. The Mission should be commended for its response to the situation in the Kasai region, where, in the space of a few months, it was able to re-establish a significant presence in an area from which it had largely withdrawn, in order to help to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.

43. The Mission's disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration programme has achieved considerable progress in disarming and reintegrating FDLR and other foreign ex-combatants; more than 32,000 foreign ex-combatants and their dependants, mainly ex-FDLR, have repatriated to Rwanda since 2002. In 2015 and 2016, the Mission's support for phase III of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme facilitated the demobilization of 5,583 ex-combatants from Congolese armed groups.

44. Furthermore, the Mission has made some gains in the fight against impunity. Sustained and vigorous human rights monitoring, investigations, documentation and reporting, as well as the support provided to the Congolese military justice system in the context of joint projects involving MONUSCO and UNDP, notably the Prosecution Support Cells, have led to 745 convictions over the past five years, including for conflict-related sexual violence crimes. MONUSCO recently coordinated the surrender and transfer to the national judicial authorities of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, a rebel commander designated on the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List, who was wanted for his command responsibility in the rape of at least 387 civilians in 2010, in North Kivu Province. With the support of MONUSCO and the United Nations Children's Fund, FARDC has been child-free since 2015.

III. Recommendations on proposed adjustments to the Mission during the pre-electoral phase

45. The field visit confirmed that the Democratic Republic of the Congo currently finds itself in the second scenario identified in the conflict analysis. It is evident that the non-consensual and partial implementation of the 31 December agreement and uncertainty over the holding of elections are fuelling the continued deterioration of the security, human rights and humanitarian situation witnessed across the country. In the meantime, the national political crisis has hampered efforts to address the economic downturn that continues to undermine the living standards of an increasingly frustrated population, whose faith in the country's political class is eroding rapidly.

46. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is likely to remain in the current situation for the foreseeable future, although the possibility of a rapid deterioration cannot be ruled out, in particular as the deadline for the holding of elections, as foreseen in the 31 December agreement, approaches. The sections below are therefore focused on the required adjustments MONUSCO will need to enable it to address the challenges of the current, pre-electoral context, in particular with regard to its core political, protection of civilians and human rights responsibilities.

A. Mission priorities

47. The review team found that without progress on the political front, the security, human rights and humanitarian situation is likely to deteriorate further, with profound implications for the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region. As noted by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, lasting peace is achieved through political solutions and not through military and technical engagements alone. In the immediate term, the Mission must continue to focus its efforts on preventing the country's relapse into violent conflict by creating conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair and credible elections, leading to a peaceful transfer of power, in accordance with the Constitution.

48. With the way forward on elections still unclear, MONUSCO will need to take further steps to reorient its activities around two key strategic priorities, namely: (a) support for the implementation of the 31 December agreement, in order to pave the way for credible elections; and (b) protection of civilians and human rights monitoring and reporting, to mitigate, to the extent possible, the impact of the prevailing crisis on the civilian population. MONUSCO is already taking steps to respond to the shifting political and security environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the current financially constrained environment, it is all the more essential that the Mission further streamline its activities around a limited set of priorities while seeking ways to leverage the presence of the United Nations country team and key external partners in areas that fall outside of its core areas of responsibility but are essential to sustain peace and promote longer-term stability and development in the country.

1. Support for the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement

49. As indicated above, the national political crisis is the main driver of the increase in violence and human rights abuses witnessed across the country over the past year and a half, aggravating the humanitarian situation and compounding an economic crisis that has fuelled popular frustration and raised the spectre of widespread social unrest. At this critical juncture, the Mission's political strategy will need to be focused on achieving tangible progress towards the holding of free, fair and credible elections within the framework of the 31 December agreement. This will require extensive good offices and engagement with interlocutors across the political spectrum, including the Government, opposition parties and civil society, as well as enhanced outreach to regional and international partners with tangible leverage. Equally critical is the need for an integrated approach in which the political and technical aspects of the work of the United Nations are mutually reinforcing. A dedicated senior adviser, reporting to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, could assist him in his efforts to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections and keep the electoral process on track through his good offices.

50. The finalization of the voter registration process and the publication of a credible and realistic electoral calendar are essential to restore confidence in the

political transition. While MONUSCO is ready to play its part in supporting the efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the involvement of the African Union, SADC and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), alongside long-standing international partners such as the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, is critical to help to overcome the mistrust that has undermined the political process since the signing of the 31 December agreement. Increased logistical and financial support from African countries with the necessary capacities would be an important symbol of the continent's commitment to the success of the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The modalities of such cooperation are described in further detail below.

51. The request by the Independent National Electoral Commission to the United Nations and other regional and international partners for assistance in elaborating a credible and realistic electoral calendar could provide a valuable opportunity to build confidence in the electoral process by enhancing the level of international support and engagement, with full respect for the independence of the Commission. Such engagement could entail regular evaluations of the electoral process and, if need be, public statements aimed at sustaining pressure on all parties to maintain the momentum towards elections.

52. Whatever steps are taken to manage the publication of a new electoral calendar, a further postponement of the elections is likely to elicit strong reactions among the political class and the wider population, hence the need for immediate measures to avoid a further escalation of tensions. Although interlocutors within the Government and the opposition were keen to shift the burden of responsibility towards each other, there was recognition on both sides that steps are required to keep frustrations from boiling over. In this regard, there was a degree of openness to the idea of MONUSCO and the African Union, working with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, as required, to conduct an inventory of confidence-building measures that could be undertaken in the immediate to short term, while efforts are under way to resolve the outstanding emblematic cases, which would need to be dealt with separately. Such measures would, necessarily, include a commitment from all sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric.

53. In this delicate phase, it is critical that the public messaging by the international community on the political process is coherent, balanced and appropriate, in order to avoid playing into the hands of radical elements on both sides of the political divide. This may help to assuage those within the presidential majority who feel that Mr. Kabila's intentions are being unfairly characterized by some members of the international community. This will need to be accompanied by intensified efforts at all levels of the United Nations to coordinate more closely with the African Union and other key regional actors, which can play a useful role in steering the transition to a successful conclusion. Further details on how this could be achieved are provided below.

2. Protection of civilians and human rights

54. In the absence of a broader political settlement, efforts by MONUSCO to protect civilians under threat of physical violence, monitor, investigate and report on human rights abuses and fight impunity will remain critical. In the pre-electoral phase, the main focus of the Mission's protection work will be on reducing the threat posed to civilians by armed groups through the uniformed and civilian components of the Mission, as well as limiting the impact of election-related violence, including abuses by State security forces against people seeking to exercise their fundamental civil and political rights.

Comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians

55. The Mission's comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians will require presence and capability in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo affected by armed groups, as well as in urban hotspots. The Mission should have the ability to address protection threats in Kinshasa and intervene in multiple locations anywhere in the country on a scale comparable to its current deployment in the Kasai region. Given the vastness of the country, the widening array of threats faced by the population and the limited resources at the disposal of MONUSCO, the Mission's overarching strategy will be to focus on the prevention, de-escalation and resolution of conflicts in the first instance, while shifting from protection through presence to protection through projection and capitalizing on the wide array of civilian protection tools available to the Mission, with the MONUSCO force working in combination with the police component. To this end, the Mission will build on the lessons learned from its response to the conflict in the Kasai region.

56. In a context of heightened political tensions, in which abuses by the national security forces pose an ever-increasing threat to the population, the Mission's approach should, at its core, target the political dimensions of conflict and insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO will need to enhance its political engagement with the government authorities and the leadership of the security forces at the national and provincial levels, as well as with local administrators and community leaders, to remind them of their primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, particularly in the run-up to and during elections. Given the surge in human rights violations attributable to members of the national security forces, the provision of blanket support to FARDC should be reviewed and made available on a case-by-case basis, in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

57. Strategic communications around the protection of civilians that stress the authorities' primary role and duties with respect to human rights should be strengthened. Regional stakeholders should also be engaged, at the strategic level, to use whatever leverage they may have to limit the scope for abuses by national security forces. Ways to enhance, in a mutually reinforcing manner, the role of United Nations mandate holders relating to protection should also be explored extensively.

58. Over the years, MONUSCO has developed a broad range of protection tools, such as community alert networks, community liaison officers, joint protection teams, mobile monitoring and response teams and joint assessment missions. As the Mission shifts towards protection through projection, it will need to expand and make full use of these tools to ensure an effective response to protection threats in priority areas of concern. In parallel, MONUSCO will also need to improve its strategic communications and strengthen its community-level engagement to build confidence among local populations in its ability to respond to threats in a timely manner. The successful implementation of the Mission's comprehensive strategy on protection would also require the strengthening of certain key sections, such as the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the Civil Affairs Section, through the addition of dedicated, rapidly deployable staff. In the meantime, the Mission should also continue to address the ongoing threat posed by explosive hazards on the civilian population, Mission personnel and humanitarian actors.

59. The Mission's good offices and advocacy at the local and national levels will need to be supported by enhanced information collection, stakeholder mapping and conflict analysis to produce the desired results. It will be critical for MONUSCO to expand and strengthen its early warning capacity, especially in areas where the force

is not present, through greater situational awareness; human rights monitoring; information collection; trend and hotspot analysis, including with a gender lens; planning; and prioritization. The Mission should also increase the exchange of information with United Nations and non-United Nations human rights and humanitarian actors through dedicated mechanisms, in particular in areas affected by the closure of MONUSCO bases. The Mission should continue to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of women and girls are taken into account across the board, from early warning to community alert mechanisms and mitigation strategies.

60. MONUSCO should continue to use mobile monitoring and response teams to respond to threats or investigate events, particularly in areas where the Mission's presence is limited, such as the western Democratic Republic of the Congo. In urban centres, the police component will provide a measure of protection from election-related threats through its presence and continued advocacy with the national police on the use of non-lethal force, as well as training and support to the security forces to improve public order management and command and control. The police component would also support the development of key oversight mechanisms, such as the Inspectorate General of the Congolese National Police.

Reduction of the threat posed by armed groups

61. The Mission's efforts to reduce the threat posed by armed groups would be focused on FDLR, ADF and FRPI. As part of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, the Mission has developed tailored strategies for these priority armed groups, involving engagement with government authorities, community leaders and other influential actors; disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration activities and support for national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives complemented by community violence reduction projects; unilateral force operations; support for military operations by FARDC and, where necessary, joint operations with FARDC under specific conditions and in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy; and information collection. The overarching objective of these strategies is to minimize the impact of the activities of the armed group on the civilian population and reduce them to a level that can be managed by the Congolese security forces.

62. An exclusively military approach to the upsurge in Mai-Mai groups, which is linked in large part to the uncertain political context, is unlikely to have a meaningful impact. A comprehensive response, backed by integrated analysis and including high-level engagement with the Congolese authorities at the national and provincial levels, as well as community engagement at the local level, is required to deal with this problem. The Mission's strategy should also seek to weaken any political support provided to these groups and disconnect them from the local population, including by helping to expose those responsible for manipulating armed groups for their own ends where information thereon is available.

Human rights monitoring and the fight against impunity

63. Human rights monitoring, investigating and reporting remain key protection tools. In a context of shrinking political space, MONUSCO will need to robustly monitor the degree of respect for civil and political rights and freedoms and report publicly on progress and continuing challenges. This will enhance the ability of the Mission to identify perpetrators and push for accountability, which is critical to prevent further abuses. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office will also have a key role to play in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the confidence-building measures envisaged in the 31 December agreement.

64. The Mission's senior-level advocacy with Government officials and the leadership of national security institutions will be critical to promote respect for human rights, restore confidence in the national security forces and further implement United Nations action plans to end and prevent sexual violence and child recruitment. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, including through the Senior Women's Protection Adviser, will also have a key role to play in enabling the senior leadership of MONUSCO to take early action and engage at the appropriate level through its monitoring and reporting, interaction with communities and analytical work. The Office's efforts, as well as those of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser, to ensure accountability for grave human rights violations and conflict-related sexual violence, including through support for mobile courts and participation in joint investigation teams, will remain critical, as will the joint support provided to the military justice system through the Prosecution Support Cells.

65. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the Senior Women's Protection Adviser, with the support of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, should continue to support FARDC and the national police in implementing the Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations on the Fight Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and related action plans, with particular emphasis on strengthening accountability as a critical aspect of protection, deterrence and prevention. The delisting of FARDC and the national police in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence depends on the cessation of sexual violence and the full implementation of their commitments under the Joint Communiqué. Monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions, will also remain a key protection tool and provide an opportunity for MONUSCO to engage strategically with parties to conflict, exert political pressure and equip parties with tools to end and prevent grave violations against children.

66. The MONUSCO secretariat should continue its advisory role with regard to human rights due diligence with the Mission's senior leadership on appropriate support for FARDC and the national police that is in line with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy. In this regard, the Mission's support for the security forces should be guided by risk assessments and continue to be linked to the degree of respect demonstrated by FARDC and the national police for international human rights standards and fundamental political rights and freedoms. Such support should be withdrawn where there is a clear failure to adhere to those standards.

Support for the establishment of security conditions favourable to the delivery of humanitarian assistance

67. MONUSCO should, where possible and in full compliance with humanitarian principles, continue to do its utmost to facilitate humanitarian access and ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who need it. MONUSCO should provide security to humanitarian workers, facilities and assets, when requested and within the limitation of its capabilities. To this end, the Mission should participate, as requested, in joint mechanisms with humanitarian actors to coordinate its support for humanitarian assistance.

68. The reconfiguration of the force will inevitably have an impact on humanitarian access to certain areas. In this regard, it will be of key importance to analyse the humanitarian dimension of any force reduction and mitigate the potential impact by drawing on lessons learned from areas from which MONUSCO has already withdrawn. Under the leadership of the Deputy Special Representative

of the Secretary-General (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator), MONUSCO should strengthen its collaboration with humanitarian actors and streamline coordination mechanisms with humanitarian agencies in areas in which the force is not deployed, to ensure information-sharing on protection risks for vulnerable populations. To this end, a consultation process should be established with the humanitarian community on key decisions on its posture and on their implementation. This would enable the Mission to better target its protection strategy and respond swiftly to humanitarian emergencies.

B. Implications for the Mission and United Nations partnerships with key stakeholders

1. Mission leadership

69. The MONUSCO leadership structure and working methods should enable the Mission to deliver on its core priorities more effectively. This will require greater strategic engagement with the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and closer integration between the Mission's various components and with the United Nations country team to maximize the combined impact of the full range of capabilities at the Organization's disposal. Mechanisms for intra-mission coordination should be strengthened to enable "whole of mission" efforts, in particular on priority issues such as the protection of civilians. These mechanisms should be replicated at the provincial level to ensure unity of effort across the mission area.

70. In this critical phase, the Mission's senior leadership should be present in the capital to engage strategically with the national authorities and the leadership of the national security forces, while maintaining sufficient operational capacity in the provinces. The functions of each of the Mission's pillars should reflect its key priorities in the pre-electoral phase, with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Protection and Operations — currently the Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law and Operations in the East — focusing primarily on the implementation of the comprehensive approach for the protection of civilians across the country. The Deputy Special Representative (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator) would continue to ensure effective coordination with the United Nations country team, maintain appropriate linkages with the wider humanitarian community and oversee the United Nations integrated electoral support team. The Force Commander should be permanently based in Kinshasa to enable engagement with the highest echelons of FARDC, to facilitate coordination on the ground and address protection concerns linked to the behaviour of its members.

2. Evolution of the force

71. As noted above, with violence spreading across the country, the MONUSCO force will need to adapt its posture and rely increasingly on protection through projection, as opposed to protection through presence. The reconfiguration of the force would be carried out in phases, each of which would be preceded by a thorough risk assessment analysing the impact of the adjustments on the security situation. These adjustments would allow MONUSCO to withdraw from areas in which security conditions have improved, while enhancing its readiness to project force in order to address emerging protection threats, as and when required. In its new configuration, the force would rely on flexible and agile rapidly deployable battalions operating in standing combat deployments, as opposed to company operating bases and temporary operating bases, which are static structures. This

approach is currently being implemented in the Kasai region and will be replicated in North Kivu Province, where the Mission has recently closed a number of company operating bases and temporary operating bases.

72. As part of this process, two or three additional rapidly deployable battalions would be created by July 2018 through the rerolling of framework battalions. An enhanced number of rapidly deployable battalions would enable the Mission to intervene in an increased number of priority locations and thereby reduce its footprint. As a consequence, depending on the degree of progress made towards establishing the additional battalions and barring a further deterioration of the security situation, up to two or three framework battalions could be repatriated by the end of 2018. A framework should be developed to determine where the battalions are deployed and for how long to pre-empt, prevent and respond to threats to civilians. These measures will come in addition to the reductions arising from the troop ceiling authorized in resolution 2348 (2017) and the budget cuts imposed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly for the 2017/18 fiscal year — amounting to a reduction of 8.5 per cent from the Secretary-General's proposal — as a result of which one full battalion has already been repatriated and a further four companies are planned to be repatriated in October 2017.

73. By the end of 2018, the Intervention Brigade of the force would be reconfigured to a volume of two battalions and integrated into the force's overall command and operational structure. Intervention Brigade units would be further "unlocked" from their static infrastructure and would be deployed to the areas in which the force operates, where they would be projected with other units to address protection threats, including through operations to neutralize priority armed groups. The headquarters of the Intervention Brigade would be co-located with the force headquarters and placed under the direct command of the Force Commander to streamline overall command and control. The remainder of the Intervention Brigade troops and brigade headquarters elements would be repatriated. In the meantime, countries contributing troops to the Intervention Brigade have been requested to deploy troops with specific capacities and training, including in jungle warfare capability, to enhance the impact of operations against armed groups. This is expected to be completed by February 2018 in the context of the regular rotations of Intervention Brigade battalions.

74. The Mission would achieve further efficiencies by streamlining headquarters command and control structures and improving coordination between the force and the police component in priority areas. Given their strategic importance in liaising with communities, MONUSCO should retain women in and add women to the force as it is streamlined.

75. By the end of 2018, the force would be reorganized into four geographic sectors, for the northern, southern, central and western Democratic Republic of the Congo, each with one or two rapidly deployable battalions, a limited number of framework battalions and one contingency-based company of the Intervention Brigade deployed in various sectors to conduct operations against armed groups. The force will also have at its disposal a force reserve and enablers, complemented by enhanced situational awareness and airlift assets for mobility.

76. Effective protection through projection would require robust logistical support, enhanced availability of air and ground transportation assets, the right contingent-owned equipment and flexible administrative arrangements to enable civilian staff to accompany military deployments as part of the Mission's comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. The force's successful evolution will also depend on the timely deployment of key enablers, such as the advanced unmanned aircraft systems and a Geolocation and Technical Analysis Unit, specialized

companies trained in jungle warfare and adequate resources for generating the human intelligence required to effectively neutralize priority armed groups.

77. Improving the performance of the force will be critical to achieving the shifts described above. To this end, the Mission has recently launched a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the performance of units, based on a set of measurable indicators, which will assist in determining which contingents to retain or repatriate. This will be complemented by external sources, including academic surveys, to evaluate the impact of the Mission's operations, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians.

3. Police component

78. In order to contribute effectively to the achievement of the Mission's priority objectives in the pre-electoral period, the police component will need to narrow the focus of its activities and become more flexible and agile. Two formed police units are being relocated from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to Kananga and Kinshasa in the pre-electoral phase. However, additional engagement with police-contributing countries will be required to remove constraints on the Mission's ability to move formed police units to where they are most needed. A review of the Statement of Unit Requirements should be undertaken to enable the temporary detachment of subunits of the formed police units for limited periods of time to cover larger geographical areas on the basis of risk assessments. An increased number of armoured personnel carriers for each formed police unit, the assignment of a compatible number of field defence stores and enhanced self-sustainment equipment would also facilitate mobility.

79. The contribution of the police component to the Mission's situational awareness and early warning through information collection and analysis will remain essential, as will its participation in joint protection missions, joint investigation teams and joint monitoring teams. The Mission's integrated operational strategy for the fight against insecurity, which aims to pre-empt and respond to protection concerns through engagement with local communities, local authorities and the national police, should be expanded.

80. The Mission's interaction with the national police command will be critical to reduce the risk of human rights abuses and underscore the primary responsibility of the Congolese authorities with regard to the protection of civilians, as well as ensuring that the national police adheres to international human rights standards. Constant, senior-level engagement with the leadership of the national police will be critical in this regard. The police component, working closely with the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, should strengthen its support for the Congolese authorities in the area of human rights training and mentoring in non-lethal crowd control. In this regard, the police component will have an important role to play in monitoring the training of the 10,000 new recruits recently admitted to the national police, with the aim of securing the elections and contributing to the protection of civilians.

4. Streamlining of civilian tasks

81. Activities that are not directly related to the achievement of the Mission's core strategic objectives in the pre-electoral phase should be discontinued in a prudent manner in order to preserve the gains achieved to date. To the extent possible, the distribution of thematic leads between the Mission and members of the United Nations country team should be revised on the basis of a joint priority-setting exercise. The Mission should support the efforts of the country team to mobilize funding for programmes in priority areas under its purview as it prepares the new

United Nations Development Assistance Framework. To this end, consideration should also be given to the creation of innovative funding mechanisms, such as a joint trust fund for priority sectors, and other initiatives to mobilize funding in the months ahead.

82. The Mission's Justice and Corrections Section should begin to gradually pull back from long-term, stabilization-oriented activities. On the justice side, this would require adjusting the scope of its engagement to activities directly tied to the protection of civilians and combating impunity. Prison support would concentrate progressively on a smaller number of prisons holding members of armed groups and other high-profile detainees. At the same time, ongoing joint programming in the area of the rule of law, through the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations arrangement, would be scaled up to ensure a smooth reconfiguration of the United Nations presence and facilitate the transition to increased responsibilities for the United Nations country team. This model of collaboration with the country team could be replicated in other areas.

83. In the current political environment, the Mission's activities in the area of security sector reform should be reoriented towards providing analytical support to the MONUSCO senior leadership. The integration of the Mission's existing Security Sector Reform Unit into the Political Affairs Division could enhance the effectiveness of the Mission's efforts in this critical area.

84. Support for the National Oversight Mechanism and other national institutions on the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, including capacity-building in the area of monitoring and evaluation, could be transferred to the United Nations country team by the beginning of 2018. The Mission's Political Affairs Division should follow up on the regional commitments undertaken by the signatories of the Framework. This would be accompanied by efforts to reinforce information-sharing and coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region on the political dimensions of this aspect of the Framework. Logistical support for the programmatic activities of the Office of the Special Envoy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would be coordinated with UNDP and the Office of the Deputy Special Representative (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator).

85. The Child Protection Section would continue tasks relating to the six grave violations against children, including engagement with parties to the conflict on action plans and the separation of children from armed groups and militias, and maintain the capacity to report grave violations against children. Activities relating to monitoring and reporting should be streamlined within the framework of the country task force on children and armed conflict. The Mission should also continue to engage with senior-level authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to children and armed conflict and human rights violations against children. Some activities carried out by the Section to provide direct support to victims of violations and build the capacity of Congolese actors to comply with their responsibilities could be transferred to the United Nations Children's Fund, in consultation with the Fund, within the limits of available resources.

86. The majority of the tasks carried out by the Mission's HIV/AIDS Unit should be absorbed by country team partners. This would, of course, require the strengthening of their capacities in that regard.

87. Given the significant cost of supporting the camps at Kamina and Kitona and the reluctance of members of armed groups to join the programme, the Mission's

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section should redirect its support to the third phase of the national programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration away from the camps and towards more mobile, flexible structures located in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where its community violence reduction projects are targeted both at ex-combatants and youth at risk. Kamina and Kitona continue to host some 1,100 ex-combatants waiting to return to their communities, while some 3,777 ex-combatants have already returned back to the east for long-term community-based reintegration. The potential of community violence reduction as a tool to address new "hotspots" in Tanganyika Province and the Kasai region, as well as anticipated community-based electoral violence, should also be explored.

88. The Mission currently funds three camps, located at Kanyobagonga (North Kivu), Walungu (South Kivu) and Kisangani (Tshopo) and hosting 1,350 FDLR combatants and their dependants, as part of the FDLR voluntary disarmament process, initiated in June 2014. Aside from a few individual repatriations over the past two years, the group has continued to make its return to Rwanda contingent on an inter-Rwandan dialogue, which the Government of Rwanda has made clear it will not accept. In the meantime, efforts should be focused on finding technical solutions within the context of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, while also prompting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assume greater responsibility for the management of the camps that the Mission is currently supporting at a significant cost.

89. MONUSCO is also responsible for sustaining 557 members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition), who are accommodated in the main MONUSCO disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration camp in Munigi, near Goma. To date, MONUSCO has managed to relocate 89 SPLM/A in Opposition elements holding visas to enter third countries through bilateral efforts. MONUSCO, in collaboration with the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, should continue to engage countries of the region to find a solution to both the voluntary disarmament process for FDLR and the issue of the SPLM/A in Opposition combatants.

90. Significant gains in the area of long-term stabilization are highly unlikely in the current political climate. It is essential, therefore, that the resources made available for stabilization programmes support the achievement of the Mission's key priorities with regard to the protection of civilians. Linking protection-related aspects of the Mission's stabilization work, such as community-level engagement, women's inclusion and local conflict mediation, to its political engagement at the national and provincial levels will be key in this regard.

91. At the same time, the Mission's Stabilization Support Unit should begin transitioning to a structure jointly managed by MONUSCO and UNDP in anticipation of a full transfer to the United Nations country team in the post-electoral period. The planning of this transition should take account of the ongoing contributions of the country team to stabilization efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

5. Mission support

92. The shift towards a more agile and flexible mission posture will be a test for the Mission's support component. Mission support efforts must be complemented with contingent-owned equipment that is fit for purpose and fully operational in theatre. Effective protection through projection will also depend on the availability of a range of transport capabilities, including ground transportation and airlift

capabilities, as well as accommodation that can support timely logistical support and resupply efforts.

93. The operationalization of the Mission's comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians will require adjustments to the Mission's administrative procedures and the development of new ones to promote greater mobility and flexibility of staff deployments. The outsourcing of non-core support functions could also enable the Mission to adapt to rapid shifts in demand for certain services.

94. The funding sought and approved for the current budget year does not cover technical and logistical support for the forthcoming elections, as mandated by the Security Council. The delineation of roles and responsibilities, including funding, between MONUSCO, the Independent National Electoral Commission, UNDP and other partners will determine any subsequent adjustments to the Mission's resourcing and/or funding. Member States should be encouraged to fund the multi-partner fund for the Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo, an electoral support project.

95. The dual headquarters structure of recent years, which oversees a multilayered network of major field offices, operating bases and antenna offices, along with a rear logistics base in Entebbe, Uganda, has been a major determinant of the Mission's resource requirements. The Mission's large physical footprint places a considerable strain on its management and support systems. Building on the work of the civilian staffing review of 2016, and as MONUSCO streamlines its work around a limited set of priorities and reduces its deployment levels, the Mission's civilian footprint, as well as the staffing of its support structures, will also need to be reviewed and reconfigured.

96. The Mission's supply chain management functions are currently concentrated in Goma, a location that is prone to risks, both natural and conflict-related, constitutes a costly operating environment and does not fully capitalize on the investment already made in the Entebbe Support Base. Business continuity in the face of deteriorating security should also be a key element of the Mission's ongoing planning and should be taken into consideration in the placement of critical capacities and other resources. In this regard, Entebbe provides a base for non-location-dependent coordination, planning and oversight of support operations that is closer to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo than Kinshasa. Opportunities should also be explored to further reduce air transport costs by taking advantage of the improving road infrastructure between Entebbe and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Security conditions permitting and subject to the approval of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, riverways may also provide alternative supply routes to Kinshasa.

97. The Mission should also undertake a review of enabling military units, especially military engineering and aviation-related units. Presently, six military engineering companies are employed in MONUSCO as an integral part of the Mission's overall engineering capacity. In addition, the enhanced focus on rapidly deployable battalions to project the force in an expeditionary manner to priority locations demands a comprehensive review of aviation assets that takes account of the full range of aircraft available through both commercial and military sources and ensures a flexible mix of assets that can be redeployed for multiple purposes, as required.

98. Key work processes and systems, such as recruitment, procurement and asset tracking, should be reviewed to enhance responsiveness and accountability. Operational elements essential for rapid deployment and agility should be subject to management by the Mission, including the engagement of aviation capacities. There is also a need to enhance the authority of the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General to ensure the accountability of the Mission's staff, which should be accompanied by stronger investigation capabilities for serious misconduct, sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption cases. The establishment of a performance management framework is expected to significantly reform the management of the Mission's resources and align it with programmatic priorities. It will also create opportunities for the Mission to identify further efficiencies in support of mandated priorities.

6. Cooperation with the region

99. As noted above, collaboration between the United Nations and key regional partners remains essential to overcome the current political impasse. In this regard, more should be done to ensure that countries with a direct stake in preserving the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo play a role in enhancing the engagement of the international community with the Government and other key Congolese stakeholders. Regular and sustained consultations between the United Nations, the African Union, SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, ECCAS, the European Union and other key regional actors should be held to ensure that the region and the wider international community speak with one voice in supporting the implementation of the 31 December agreement. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa could play a critical role in reinforcing the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo by mobilizing key regional leaders and other influential actors to put their full weight behind the successful conclusion of the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Appropriate coordination arrangements should be put in place in this regard.

100. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remains a vital mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. At this critical juncture, the United Nations should deepen its cooperation with the core signatory countries and the guarantor institutions of the Framework, namely, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, to ensure that major regional political and security challenges are addressed in a spirit of cooperation. These challenges include the need to find durable solutions to the issue of foreign and local armed groups still operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the repatriation or relocation of ex-combatants (from FDLR, SPLM/A in Opposition and the former Mouvement du 23 mars). In that regard, the review team was informed of ongoing efforts by representatives of signatory countries to the Framework, through its Technical Support Committee, co-chaired by the United Nations and the African Union, to assess progress and challenges to the neutralization of armed groups, disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration, and the voluntary disarmament process for FDLR and SPLM/A in Opposition and make recommendations to the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

IV. Adjustments following the successful implementation of the 31 December agreement and sustainable progress towards reducing the threat posed by armed groups

A. Mission priorities

101. The ultimate aim of MONUSCO is to ensure that security conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo no longer pose a tangible threat to international peace and security and remain that way even after the Mission's departure. The following broad conditions would be key to achieving the Mission's desired end state: (a) the holding of credible elections leading to a peaceful transfer of power; (b) the reduction of the threat posed by the remaining foreign armed groups to a level that can be managed by the country's security forces; (c) the reduction of intercommunal tensions and conflicts in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces to a level that can be managed by the Congolese authorities with support from the United Nations country team and other partners; and (d) progress in the fight against impunity, so that the security forces are no longer perceived as a threat to civilians.

102. Elections are by no means a panacea for the deep-rooted problems that have prevented the Democratic Republic of the Congo from achieving lasting stability and development. Moreover, the country's history has demonstrated that electoral periods can be particularly fragile. In that regard, the Mission would need to continue to develop contingency plans for a possible deterioration of the situation, both in the provinces and in the capital, in the run-up to the elections, during the elections and in the immediate post-electoral period.

103. Nevertheless, credible elections resulting in the peaceful transfer of power remain essential to stem the spread of violence across the country and defuse emerging conflicts in the Kasai region, Tanganyika Province and other emerging hotspots. The presence of a legitimately elected government at the national and provincial levels, combined with the establishment of robust reconciliation mechanisms, would be key to addressing long-standing issues of identity, land ownership, access to pasture lands, displacement and resettlement that will continue to fuel conflict in the country.

104. The sustainable reduction of the threat posed by foreign armed groups along the borders with Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan would significantly reduce the perception of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a threat to international peace and security. The engagement of key bilateral partners would be critical to steadily build the capacity of Congolese security actors to progressively assume responsibility for maintaining security and public order across their country.

105. It would also be important to build on the progress made within the context of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to foster cooperation between countries in the region in addressing their common security and economic challenges. Continued efforts to find durable political solutions to the remaining presence of foreign armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as its neighbours, and contain the cross-border spillover of conflicts in the region will remain a priority in order to prepare the ground for the departure of the Mission. Efforts to ensure that individuals accused of gross human rights violations and international crimes who are circulating freely in the region are brought to justice would also be key to promoting lasting peace and reconciliation in the region.

B. Adjustment of Mission components

1. Civilian tasks

106. Should credible elections resulting in a peaceful transfer of power take place, MONUSCO would be able to enter a phase of consolidation of operations. During this phase, the Mission would focus primarily on supporting a peaceful transition at all levels of government, continuing to implement a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, and strengthening regional cooperation, in particular on the issue of foreign armed groups.

107. The Mission's good offices would be required to support a peaceful transition and foster a broad national consensus around key governance and security reforms, the resolution of residual electoral disputes and the tackling of the root causes of conflict in priority areas to reduce the level of political support for armed groups. The Mission would provide strategic advice to the national authorities on how to take forward key reforms and work with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, to promote inclusion in the political process. MONUSCO would also mobilize regional and international support for key governance and security sector reforms.

108. Within the framework of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, MONUSCO would continue to pursue its tailored strategies for each priority armed group, while strengthening the capacity of civil society actors to undertake conflict monitoring, early warning and mediation. Efforts to develop a more responsive, agile and mobile force that is capable of carrying out protection through projection would also continue. As the situation improves, the force would increasingly orient its activities towards engagement with FARDC on residual protection concerns and the handover of responsibilities.

109. The police component would continue to operate in a flexible, mobile manner, with the formed police units ready to intervene in potentially volatile situations that pose a risk to civilians and United Nations personnel. The police component would prioritize advocacy with national police commanders to ensure respect for human rights and provide training, capacity-building and advice on the reform of the national police, in strict compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy guidelines.

110. In the area of the rule of law, an orderly and gradual transition of tasks relating to reform and stabilization would be achieved within the framework of the draft rule of law transition plan and a revised joint programme with the United Nations country team and especially with UNDP. In the immediate post-electoral period, the Mission's Justice and Corrections Section would maintain a focus on the strengthening of administrative and judicial processes for the resolution of electoral disputes and would continue its assistance for investigation and prosecution efforts through the Prosecution Support Cells. The Mission would focus its prison security support on a selected number of facilities holding high-risk inmates and would support the reinforcement of the criminal justice chain in priority areas in preparation for a handover of tasks. The Mission would also support the implementation of the national policy on justice reform.

111. As donor confidence increases in the post-electoral period, the United Nations country team and other partners would progressively engage in stabilization and institution-building efforts. Additional donor support would be required to ensure that the country team has the resources necessary to scale up its engagement and gradually take over additional tasks from the Mission. The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy would transition to the country team, with the

Stabilization Support Unit fully managed by UNDP. During this phase, the transfer of the Strategy to the country team could be managed through the establishment of a joint transitional arrangement between MONUSCO and the country team.

112. MONUSCO could also explore the gradual transfer of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration operations to the Government, with support from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other international actors. The handover of specific activities to the United Nations country team could be explored within the framework of the joint task force of MONUSCO and the country team on the reintegration of ex-combatants, as part of the united joint action and transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2. Force adjustments

113. In the first year following the successful holding of elections and a peaceful transfer of power, the strength and geographical footprint of the force could be further reduced by repatriating two to three additional framework battalions, subject to an assessment of security conditions and progress made towards increasing its mobility and agility, including the generation and deployment of key enablers. During this period, the force would retain the ability to project troops in response to protection threats as they arise across the country.

114. The Intervention Brigade of the force could be downsized to a battalion comprising three companies, distributed across the northern, central and southern sectors, and the remainder of the headquarters elements repatriated. An additional reduction of 30 per cent in the number of military observers could also be envisaged. At the end of this process, the Mission would maintain four sectors, with one or two rapidly deployable battalions in each sector and an Intervention Brigade company in all sectors except the west. The force would also have three special forces companies, a reserve force and enablers. The capacity of FARDC to counter residual security threats and protect civilians as the Mission reduces its footprint would need to be assessed constantly. As the situation improves, the force would increasingly orient its activities towards engagement with FARDC on remaining protection concerns and the handover of responsibilities, as it progressively builds its capacity with support from bilateral and other partners. Accelerating the pace of those efforts will be a key priority in order to enable the timely drawdown and exit of MONUSCO.

3. Police adjustments

115. The Mission's police component would also be able to progressively reduce its footprint or withdraw completely from areas in which the national police demonstrates an ability to operate independently. If security conditions allow, the police component could gradually, over a period of 12 months, reduce its current mandated strength by releasing 35 individual police officers and one formed police unit, followed by a further phased reduction. Further reductions would be subject to an evaluation of the role of the police component in paving the way to the Mission's exit strategy, during which time the police component would support the Mission with community engagement, networking and capacity-building.

C. Strategic risks

116. The prospect of a deepening of the political crisis and a further deterioration of the security, human rights and humanitarian situation cannot be ruled out. If elections are delayed indefinitely or the results are widely rejected by the

population, the resulting crisis of legitimacy could foster the proliferation of armed groups and uprisings across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which would have profound implications for the stability of the country and the region as a whole. Political space would shrink dramatically and would be accompanied by an increase in human rights violations. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would likely be unable to exercise State authority in many areas, and security and protection risks would increase significantly, particularly for women and children. Areas not previously affected by violence would likely become increasingly unstable, and intercommunal violence would intensify.

117. In such a scenario, the Mission would have to focus on maintaining its ability to operate in an increasingly volatile environment. It would continue to prioritize the protection of civilians and human rights through a comprehensive approach, although its ability to do so would be severely constrained, as more of its troops and police would be required to secure United Nations personnel and installations and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. There would be little scope for any major reconfiguration or reduction of the Mission's troop and police strength. The Mission may also be obliged to suspend the provision of all forms of direct support to the authorities and the security forces.

V. Observations

118. The investment by the international community in peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past 17 years has helped to bring about a profound transformation in the country's security landscape. When the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo first deployed in 1999, the country was emerging from a devastating war involving the direct military intervention of five African nations. Large swathes of the country were under the control of rebel movements more intent on plundering its vast natural wealth than attending to the basic needs of the population.

119. By 2006, that mission had presided over the withdrawal of the remaining foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and helped to steer the country towards its first democratic elections in 46 years. The successful conclusion of the transition following the signing of the Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations marked a high point in the long history of United Nations engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet since then, the country has struggled to build on this historic achievement. The contested elections of 2011 were a setback for the consolidation of the country's fledgling democracy. The vast majority of Congolese continue to live in abject poverty and lack access to the most basic services. The State is still absent from many parts of the country and all too often preys on the citizens it is meant to protect. Challenges linked to corruption, poor governance and the illegal exploitation of the country's natural resources have sapped the confidence of donors and investors, preventing the country from realizing its full economic potential.

120. The national political crisis triggered by the failure to hold elections on time can have consequences for the country and the surrounding region. Mr. Kabila has a historic opportunity to cement his legacy as the first ever President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hand over power to an elected successor. Delays in the preparations for elections are a source of deep concern, and violations of human rights have the potential to seriously undermine the achievements of the past decade and a half. However, the Congolese authorities, who bear primary responsibility, and other concerned stakeholders still have the possibility to prevent such a setback and put their country on a more positive path.

121. With so much at stake, the international community cannot afford to conduct business as usual. All efforts must be geared towards keeping the 31 December agreement alive and ensuring the protection of civilians and human rights, as part of the broader strategy to prevent the Democratic Republic of the Congo from sliding back into conflict. The completion of the voter registration process, the early publication of a credible electoral calendar and the implementation of the confidence-building measures envisaged in the agreement are essential in this regard. Without tangible progress on each of these fronts, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is likely to enter a period of extreme volatility marked by increasingly open confrontation between the opposition and the Government and greater unrest among a population facing untold hardship.

122. As concerning as the situation is, a successful conclusion to the transition is still within reach. The registration of voters is almost complete and the Independent National Electoral Commission has signalled its intention to publish an electoral calendar soon. Most, if not all, Congolese stakeholders have reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the 31 December agreement, which was negotiated and agreed to by the Congolese themselves. Furthermore, government officials have repeatedly stated that there are no plans to revise the Constitution and that the President remains firmly committed to ushering in a democratic transition for the first time in his country's history. Going forward, international efforts to assist the Congolese in overcoming the current impasse should build on these achievements, as limited as they may be, as well as the stated commitments of the Government and other parties.

123. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the implementation of the 31 December agreement through the good offices of my Special Representative. But these efforts alone will not be sufficient to arrest the country's descent into chaos. At this critical juncture, it is vital that the region, which stands to lose the most from a return to conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, play its part in steering the political transition towards a peaceful conclusion. The country's recent history has shown, time and again, that any solution requires the full backing of its neighbours. I look forward to the leadership of and stepped-up efforts from the African Union, SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and ECCAS, alongside the United Nations, to create the conditions for the holding of inclusive and credible elections, in accordance with the Constitution.

124. I am fully committed to strengthening the United Nations partnership with these organizations and will rely on my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, my Special Representative for Central Africa and my Special Representative to the African Union to assist me in this task. I look forward to working closely with regional leaders in the critical weeks and months ahead to establish a mechanism for regular consultation and coordination on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the meantime, I encourage the leaders of the region to remain actively engaged in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which remains a critical tool for the maintenance of regional stability.

125. I am equally committed to ensuring that MONUSCO is able to protect civilians in a context of spreading local conflict and increasing human rights abuses by the national security forces and armed groups. To that end, emphasis will be placed on engaging with the country's civilian and military authorities, at the highest levels, to remind them of their fundamental obligations with regard to the protection of civilians. MONUSCO will also work with the national authorities to address the shortcomings of the national security forces, while continuing to investigate and report on human rights abuses and push for accountability, regardless of who the perpetrators may be. The provision of food, fuel and rations to FARDC and the national police will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, in strict

compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy, and adjusted, as necessary, to take account of the need for the Congolese to assume a greater share of responsibility in securing their country.

126. The multiplication of conflict hotspots and increased tensions in urban areas will require the adoption of a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians that relies on early warning and analysis to ensure effective preventive action, and the prioritization of unit tasks for protection imperatives. Further adjustments will be made to the force to enable it to better contribute to the Mission's overall efforts to contain the threat posed by armed groups and address a variety of protection threats around the country. Having played a critical role in the defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars, the Intervention Brigade of the force will also be reconfigured to address the current threat environment. The evolution of the force will be guided by the lessons learned from the Mission's response to the conflict in the Kasai region and will be taken forward in close consultation with humanitarian partners to ensure that any risks to the civilian population arising from the process are minimized.

127. Those efforts notwithstanding, there are obvious limits to what MONUSCO can be expected to achieve. Given the vastness of the country, the Mission will clearly not be able to ensure the physical protection of all civilians, hence the shift towards protection through early warning, prevention and, where required, the projection of military force. Considering that Kinshasa alone has a population density of 1,211 inhabitants per square kilometre, MONUSCO troops and police will be hard pressed to protect civilians in urban centres in the event of a major escalation of tensions, no matter how strong their presence. In such settings, engagement with the authorities and robust human rights investigation, monitoring and reporting are likely to be more effective in mitigating threats to civilians.

128. The streamlining of MONUSCO activities around a limited set of priorities will be key to enhancing its overall effectiveness, particularly in a resource-constrained environment. Further investment in long-term stabilization and institution-building efforts would be difficult to justify in the present political climate. Instead, the Mission will need to concentrate on areas in which it has a clear comparative advantage. At the same time, the strengthening of joint programming with the United Nations country team will be key to foster coherence and enhance the capacity of partner agencies to support activities aimed at consolidating and sustaining the gains achieved during the time of the MONUSCO presence to date. I encourage donors to be creative in finding ways to ensure that the resources necessary to ensure a smooth transition to longer-term stabilization and peacebuilding are made available.

129. Efforts by MONUSCO to evolve into a more effective and efficient Mission are, in many ways, in the direction of the broader management reforms that I have initiated. MONUSCO requires mobility and administrative flexibility to quickly deploy its military, police and civilian capacities to where they are most needed, to be able to adapt to the changing situation on the ground. I intend to use my authority, wherever possible, to enable the Mission to achieve its objectives, and I count on the support of Member States to take forward reforms that fall outside my remit and would enable missions such as MONUSCO to more effectively deliver on their mandates.

130. It is also imperative that Member States provide MONUSCO with the resources required to implement its mandate. I am confident that the changes under way in MONUSCO will yield efficiencies. Yet Member States should exercise caution in making further cuts to the Mission's budget that may compromise its ability to deliver on its core priorities.

131. The Mission's ultimate purpose is to prevent the collapse of the Democratic Republic of the Congo until it ceases to pose a threat to regional and international stability. The successful implementation of the 31 December agreement and the reduction of the threat posed by armed groups to a level at which they can be contained by the Congolese security forces would enable MONUSCO to shift its focus towards the use of its good offices to promote democratic processes, while addressing residual protection threats and continuing to monitor and report on human rights. The Mission would also be able to undertake further reductions of its military, police and civilian strength in anticipation of its gradual withdrawal and exit. Yet unless the Congolese are able to quickly overcome the current political impasse, the Mission may never reach that point.

132. In the long run, it is clear that there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as long as the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed. The track record of MONUSCO over the past decade demonstrates that in the absence of a genuine political commitment to reform, there is little the United Nations or any other external actor can do to build sustainable peace. The country's leaders will therefore need to decide whether they are finally ready to embrace inclusive and peaceful politics, tackle security sector reform, root out corruption and mismanagement, uphold the rule of law and ensure that all Congolese are able to enjoy their basic human rights. In such an endeavour, they can count on the full support of the United Nations in preserving the gains of the past 20 years and steering the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards long-term stability and development.

MONUSCO
September 2017
MONUSCO Headquarters
Force Forward Headquarters
Brigade Headquarters
Sector Headquarters
Formed Police Unit
Logistics base
Military Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
0 100 200 300 km
0 100 200 mi
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOUTH SUDAN
UGANDA
RWANDA
BURUNDI
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
ANGOLA
CONGO
Bangui
Kinshasa
Brazzaville
Kampala
Kigali
Bujumbura
Kindu
Kisangani
Bukavu
Goma
Lubumbashi
Kolwezi
Kananga
Mbandaka
Boende
Bandundu
Matadi
Boma
Kasongo
Kalemie
Uvira
Fizi
Moba
Pweto
Mitwaba
Manono
Kamina
Kabinda
Lusambo
Lodja
Ubundu
Bunia
Aru
Arua
Gulu
Lira
Soroti
Jinja
Entebbe
Mwanza
Dodoma
Kigoma
Ndola
Solwezi
Mansa
Kasama
Mpika
Chipata
Lilongwe
Blantyre
Mzuzu
Nampula
Tete
Beira
Quelimane
Inhambane
Maputo
Xai-Xai
Chimoio
Vilankulo
Pemba
Montepuez
Lichinga
Mocuba
Caia
Chemba
Gorongosa
Mutarara
Nhamatanda
Dondo
Inhaminga
Marromeu
Buzi
Sofala
Machanga
Caia
Mopeia
Luabo
Chinde
Mutarara
Tete
Zumbo
Mukumbura
Changara
Mutoko
Harare
Bindura
Chinhoyi
Kariba
Karoi
Chirundu
Siavonga
Lusaka
Kafue
Mongu
Kaoma
Senanga
Sesheke
Livingstone
Kazungula
Katima Mulilo
Rundu
Grootfontein
Otjiwarongo
Windhoek
Keetmanshoop
Lüderitz
Oranjemund
Walvis Bay
Swakopmund
Henties Bay
Khorixas
Opuwo
Ruacana
Oshakati
Ondangwa
Oshikango
Tsumeb
Grootfontein
Gobabis
Okahandja
Karibib
Usakos
Omaruru
Otjiwarongo
Outjo
Kamanjab
Sesfontein
Palmwag
Khorixas
Uis
Henties Bay
Swakopmund
Walvis Bay
Lüderitz
Aus
Keetmanshoop
Mariental
Rehoboth
Windhoek

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Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling resolution 2240 (2015), resolution 2312 (2016) and Presidential Statement 2015/25,

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya,

Welcoming the Secretary-General's report S/2017/761,

Recalling that international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in the ocean,

Reaffirming also the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC Convention) and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, as the primary international legal instruments to combat the smuggling of migrants and related conduct, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UNTOC Convention, as the primary international legal instruments to combat trafficking in persons,

Underlining that, although the crime of smuggling of migrants may share, in some cases, some common features with the crime of trafficking in persons, Member States need to recognize that they are distinct crimes, as defined by the UNTOC Convention and its Protocols, requiring differing legal, operational, and policy responses,

Deploring the continuing maritime tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea that have resulted in thousands of casualties, and noting with concern that such casualties were, in some cases, the result of exploitation and misinformation by transnational criminal organizations which facilitated the illegal smuggling of migrants via dangerous methods for personal gain and with callous disregard for human life,

Expressing grave concern at the ongoing proliferation of, and endangerment of lives by, the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, in particular off the

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coast of Libya and reiterating that migrants who are not persons who meet the definition of refugees under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto,

Emphasizing in this respect that migrants, including asylum seekers and regardless of their migration status, should be treated with humanity and dignity and that their rights should be fully respected, and urging all States in this regard to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international refugee law, as applicable, stressing also the obligation of States, where applicable, to protect the human rights of migrants regardless of their migration status, including when implementing their specific migration and border security policies,

Reaffirming in this respect the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, especially those of women and children, and to address international migration through international, regional or bilateral cooperation and dialogue and through a comprehensive and balanced approach, recognizing the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants, and avoiding approaches that might aggravate their vulnerability,

Further recalling the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue,

Expressing further concern that the situation in Libya is exacerbated by the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking into, through and from the Libyan territory, which could provide support to other organized crime and terrorist networks in Libya,

Mindful of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations,

Underlining the primary responsibility of the Government of National Accord to take appropriate action to prevent the recent proliferation of and endangerment of lives by the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking through the territory of Libya and its territorial sea,

Mindful of the need to support further efforts to strengthen Libyan border management, considering the difficulties of the Government of National Accord to manage effectively the migratory flows in transit through Libyan territory, and noting its concern for the repercussions of this phenomenon on the stability of Libya and of the Mediterranean region,

Welcoming ongoing support by the [redacted] Member States, including [redacted] to the European Union (EU), taking into account inter alia the role of FRONTEX and the specific mandate of EUBAM Libya in support of the Government of National Accord, and by neighbouring States,

Acknowledging the European Council Conclusions of 23 June 2017 and the press statement of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 16 February 2016 which underlined the need for effective international action to address both the immediate and long-term aspects of illegal migration and human trafficking towards Europe,

Taking note of the Decision of the Council of the European Union of 25 July 2017 to extend the mandate of EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia until 31 December 2018,

Taking further note of the ongoing discussions between the EU and the Government of National Accord on migration-related issues,

Expressing also strong support to the States in the region affected by the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking and emphasizing the need to step up coordination of efforts in order to strengthen an effective multidimensional response to these common challenges in the spirit of international solidarity and shared responsibility, to tackle their root causes and to prevent people from being exploited by migrant smugglers and human traffickers,

Acknowledging the need to assist States in the region, upon request, in the development of comprehensive and integrated regional and national strategies, legal frameworks, and institutions to counter terrorism, transnational organized crime, migrant smuggling, and human trafficking, including mechanisms to implement them within the framework of States' obligations under applicable international law,

Stressing that addressing both migrant smuggling and human trafficking, including dismantling smuggling and trafficking networks in the region and prosecuting migrant smugglers, and human traffickers requires a coordinated, multidimensional approach with States of origin, of transit, and of destination, and further acknowledging the need to develop effective strategies to deter migrant smuggling and human trafficking in States of origin and transit,

Emphasizing that migrants should be treated with humanity and dignity and that their rights should be fully respected, and urging all States in this regard to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international refugee law, as applicable,

Bearing in mind the obligations of States under applicable international law to exercise due diligence to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking, to investigate and punish perpetrators, to identify and provide effective assistance to victims of trafficking and migrants and to cooperate to the fullest extent possible to prevent and suppress migrant smuggling and human trafficking,

Reaffirming the necessity to put an end to the ongoing proliferation of, and endangerment of lives by, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya, and, for these specific purposes, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. *Condemns* all acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking into, through and from the Libyan territory and off the coast of Libya, which undermine further the process of stabilization of Libya and endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands of people,

2. *Reiterates* its calls on Member States acting nationally or through regional organizations, including the EU, to cooperate with the Government of National Accord and with each other, including by sharing information to assist Libya, upon request, in building needed capacity including to secure its borders and to prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of smuggling of migrants and human trafficking through its territory and in its territorial sea; in order to prevent the further proliferation of, and endangerment of lives by, the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking into, through and from the territory of Libya and off its coast;

3. *Urges* Member States and regional organizations, in the spirit of international solidarity and shared responsibility, to cooperate with the Government of National Accord, and with each other, including by sharing information about acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking in Libya's territorial sea and on the high seas off the coast of Libya, and rendering assistance to migrants and victims of human trafficking recovered at sea, in accordance with international law;

4. *Urges* States and regional organizations whose naval vessels and aircraft operate on the high seas and airspace off the coast of Libya, to be vigilant for acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking, and in this context, encourages States and regional organizations to increase and coordinate their efforts to deter acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking, in cooperation with Libya;

5. *Calls upon* Member States acting nationally or through regional organizations that are engaged in the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking to inspect, as permitted under international law, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, any unflagged vessels that they have reasonable grounds to believe have been, are being, or imminently will be used by organized criminal enterprises for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya, including inflatable boats, rafts and dinghies;

6. *Further calls upon* such Member States to inspect, with the consent of the flag State, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, vessels that they have reasonable grounds to believe have been, are being, or imminently will be used by organized criminal enterprises for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya;

7. *Decides* that, for a further period of twelve months from the date of adoption of this resolution to renew the authorizations as set out in paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10 of resolution 2240 (2015) and otherwise reiterates the content of those paragraphs;

8. *Reaffirms* that the authorizations provided in paragraphs 7 and 8 of resolution 2240 (2015) apply only with respect to the situation of migrant smuggling and human trafficking on the high seas off the coast of Libya and shall not affect the rights or obligations or responsibilities of Member States under international law, including any rights or obligations under UNCLOS, including the general principle of exclusive jurisdiction of a flag State over its vessels on the high seas, with respect to any other situation, and that the authorization provided in paragraph 10 in resolution 2240 (2015) applies only in confronting migrant smugglers and human traffickers on the high seas off the coast of Libya;

9. *Underscores* that this resolution is intended to disrupt the organized criminal enterprises engaged in migrant smuggling and human trafficking and prevent loss of life and is not intended to undermine the human rights of individuals or prevent them from seeking protection under international human rights law and international refugee law;

10. *Emphasizes* that all migrants, including asylum seekers, should be treated with humanity and dignity and that their rights should be fully respected, and urges all States in this regard to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international refugee law, as applicable;

11. *Urges* Member States and regional organizations acting under the authorizations referred to in paragraph 7 of this resolution to have due regard for the livelihoods of those engaged in fishing or other legitimate activities;

12. *Calls upon* all States, with relevant jurisdiction under international law and national legislation, to investigate and prosecute persons responsible for acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking at sea, consistent with States' obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international refugee law, as applicable;

13. *Calls* for Member States to consider ratifying or acceding to, and for States Parties to effectively implement the Protocol against the Smuggling of

Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and as well as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

14. *Requests* States utilizing the authority of this resolution to inform the Security Council within three months of the date of adoption of this resolution and every three months thereafter on the progress of actions undertaken in exercise of the authority provided in paragraph 7 above;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council eleven months after the adoption of this resolution on its implementation, in particular with regards to the implementation of paragraph 7 above;

16. *Expresses* its intention to continue to review the situation and consider, as appropriate, renewing the authority provided in this resolution for additional periods;

17. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.